

This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

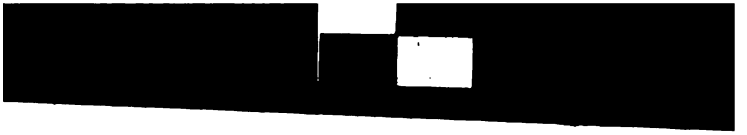
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

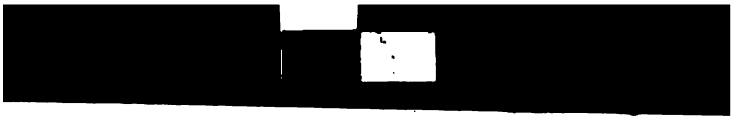
About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`









THE HIGH ADVENTURE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

A BOY'S MARRIAGE

A NOVEL

Crown 8vo. Second Edition

THE STRONGEST PLUME

A NOVEL

Crown 8vo. Second Edition

THE HIGH ADVENTURE

BY

HUGH DE SÉLINCOURT

LONDON: JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD
NEW YORK: JOHN LANE COMPANY. MCMVIII



PLYMOUTH: WILLIAM BRENDON AND SON, LTD., PRINTERS



TO

MISS JANET WHEELER

PIANIST





PART I



For whoso deems him not a God, this Love,
Yea, an enthroned Power all gods above,
'Tis a wry soul; or, having never sought
Nor felt things beautiful, he knoweth not
The spirit that moveth mightiest over men.

THE HIGH ADVENTURE

I

FOUR young men took a house in a Bloomsbury square and shared its sombre rooms. Or rather James Simson took the house, and convinced three ductile acquaintances that a bachelor establishment run under his control was the solution to the problem of life in London for a young man who was neither god nor beast, and wished to keep as long as possible from the holy snare of marriage.

It happened in this way.

Ephraim Smith did as he was told by Simson. He was grateful for any command from Simson. Simson was the pilot star of his life. "Lead, and I follow," might have

been the motto of Smith's attitude; and Simson trusted his constancy to heel so thoroughly that he never even turned his head to be sure that he was followed.

So when Simson met Bernard Linnell and his friend Cecil Williams, and found them worried by the problem of how to live pleasantly in London and yet limit their working expenses to £200 per annum, he forthwith propounded his scheme of four, mentioned one Smith, a friend of his (such a good fellow, too!), who had long dreamed of joining such a party (he had never broached the subject to Ephraim), named a house that was vacant and suitable, named a woman he had known from childhood, whom Providence had deprived of a situation in the nick of time. . . . The thing was done. In seven weeks and two days, before three of them had regained breath from the first interview, the four men were living together.

In seven months they appeared settled for life—unalterably. Linnell felt he was somehow caught for ever in this concern that

worked like well-oiled machinery — inevitably.

Not so Cecil Williams. He watched Simson's enthusiasm with amusement, and was content to profit by the arrangement, which lowered his running expenses by £50. Williams was a solicitor, and felt quite as confident of his ultimate success as the uncle in whose office he worked. He was provident. His life was planned out methodically, and he adhered to the plan without ever feeling the friction of the collar. He possessed £500 a year of his own, out of which he saved £100 and half his earnings. This sum he invested so as to bring him in never less than four or more than six per cent. He intended to be a rich man. His age was twenty-nine. He would marry suitably between the age of thirty-eight and forty, a girl of twenty-five if possible, with not more than £1500 a year, and not less than £500. Strangely enough, he looked upon love as the one thing that might trip him in his course. He feared the result of a violent passion. The fear was un-

necessary; but he took precautions. He believed in regularity for the control of all the body's functions. His manners were perfect, and he was always perfectly dressed. Everybody liked him. Nobody knew him. He hid his elaborately-thought-out scheme of life under a well-bred air of familiar indifference to every subject. A few enthusiasts and some women disliked him very much, without being able to allege any reason for their dislike. It was instinctive and incoherent. Their dislike he observed with amusement.

On the surface of life he missed little. To what was below the surface he shut his eyes, for he had decided to go far, and not to go deep.

His affections were, of course, influenced by his rigorous scheme of life. They did not, however, die; they turned quite naturally and without affectation to men who were or might be useful to him. This sincerity was invaluable to him. Nothing can take its place. The affection was none the less real because it was interested—and, ethically speak-

ing, of small value. That value was certainly raised by his honesty about the matter. He knew his own motives, and he was certain (here he made one of his few mistakes) that all men were guided, consciously or unconsciously, by the same motives as himself.

Bernard Linnell was the one person for whom he felt affection that was disinterested. Many good reasons could be found to explain why this was so, but the essence of such things is to be inexplicable. Some one, thought Williams, must take the irresponsible creature in hand. Accordingly Williams did so.

They had been at Oxford together; had played in the tennis six for their college—a pair; were friends of casual intimacy. Now it was through Williams that Linnell thought of trying for the post in the British Museum which he occupied. They happened to be discussing the future towards the end of their last term but one, and Williams asked Linnell what he intended to do or to be. Linnell answered that he intended to try and be a little nicer. When pressed to be more definite, he

burst out into an ardent defence of that, his whole theory of life. Little else, he maintained, mattered when a man was blessed with the £180 a year which he inherited from his dead father. To the outburst Williams listened with his usual amusement, and wrote that evening to the Museum for particulars about obtaining posts; pointed out over printed papers the benefit and interest of fixed work; and Bernard Linnell, after formalities and an examination, became a member of the learned staff, believing that the effort to "become a little nicer" might be made as well there as elsewhere.

For six months the novelty interested him. Then, as he sank into routine, he began to think and speak much about the nobility of work—and did none. His mind was an active one, and in disuse was apt to prey upon itself. He had now been two years and six months at the Museum, and two years and three months living in the Bloomsbury square—the corner house.

One evening in November Linnell went

from the Museum to the City. He wanted to inspect a reading-lamp which he had seen in a catalogue sent him by an enterprising ironmongery in Cheapside. After a week's darkness and rain the sun shone brightly in the morning. The brightness had inspirited him to put on the tail coat and top hat, which he seldom wore. In the important matter of clothes there were two distinct men in Linnell: one the prevalent one—that liked to stalk under a brown sombrero in a tweed coat with the collar turned up, both hands deep in his pockets, flaunting against respectability; the other that liked to walk slowly, as though in the park, disguised as a tailor's fashion plate. Occasionally they clashed. When this happened under the sombrero, he slunk home, uncomfortably self-conscious; when it happened in the top hat, he pushed it to the back of his head, lit a briar pipe, and strode along at a ridiculous pace, frowning or laughing. Be that, however, as it may, this evening he was urbanity itself, and stepped on his way with indolent precision.

He smiled at the respect of the man who served him in the ironmongery, and, finding the lamp not to his liking, joined once more the crowd in Cheapside. Every one was in a hurry to leave the City: hatless office boys dodged through the crowd with baskets—waste-paper baskets sometimes—packed with letters; warehouse girls stood in doorways, buttoning gloves or stooping to gather up their skirts, before they plunged into the tumult; all the omnibuses seemed full inside and out. Bernard loitered along observing everything, and wondering where all the middle-aged men he saw with brown hand-bags and solemn faces lived, how much they earned, and whether they were happy.

He stood opposite the General Post Office, on the kerb, and watched the traffic, that crawled in a thick, slow wedge down Cheapside, loosen and quicken its pace; he watched the horses stagger and slip as they tried to get a grip on the wet wood pavement and to break into a trot. He liked the bustling life of the scene. The sense of aloofness from that life,

and indeed from every other form of life, was pleasurable to him. Nothing mattered but the polish on his hat and the rigidity of the line down his trousers. Music, love, literature seemed mere dreams of a fanciful dreamer. This clamour was reality. He would drive an omnibus from Turnham Green to London Bridge, if it were not such dull work to drive horses whose necks and heads only were visible. He might as well continue on his own hobby-horse, and continue to decipher letters in German characters about non-existent manuscripts on unimportant questions. The number of respectable middle-aged men hurrying back to suburban boredom seemed to be increasing every minute.

He felt quite pleased, and smiled to think that he was loitering home to be bored by himself and Simson in the well-conducted bachelor establishment. "Mir ist alles einerlei," he hummed.

He was preparing to walk across a small space left between a goods van and a four-wheeled cab when he felt a pull on his sleeve and heard

a small voice say, "Please take me 'cross the street."

He looked down and saw a minute and very ragged little girl without any hat, stretching a filthy little hand towards him. She wore no stockings, and her toes appeared through boots which were grotesquely large for her. She shook the hair out of her eyes as she looked up. There was no entreaty in her voice or in her look. Suddenly Linnell felt immense pleasure. His face grew red, and he laughed as he took the hand. He stood holding her hand, for the four-wheeled cab was in front of them. Then he piloted her across the street. She disappeared immediately, and as mysteriously as she had appeared.

Bernard went on his way elated.

His walk and manner changed completely. There was nothing defiant or self-conscious in him. He remembered the look of confidence in the child's bright eyes, and laughed aloud, since happiness made him laugh. He felt singled out and honoured. Absolute joy came over him. He scarcely knew why. It was,

of course, an accident that the dirty little girl had happened upon him—a delightful accident. Still the fact remained that she had singled him out; that her instinct had led her to approve of him, in spite of his immaculate dress, behind which he thought that he was effectually hidden.

"Hullo, I am most fearfully pleased to see you," he cried, greeting a man whom he had known slightly at Oxford, and whom, in the ordinary course of things, he would have greeted with a short nod and a movement of the mouth which could not be called a smile. The man was astonished. "The fool's in love, I should think, and going to see the girl," he said to himself.

Linnell continued on his way, elated. The little incident had put him in reach of all the things for which he most cared. He felt alive. The depression which usually assailed him, as he turned into the comfortable gloom of the Bloomsbury square, had no strength to penetrate his armour of joy. The smell of cooking he encountered, as usual, in the bare

great hall of the house affected him with only a momentary disgust. Nothing had power to drag him down, nothing could spoil that evening for him. That he recognised for a fact, while he was changing into an old Norfolk jacket and flannel trousers. There was a whole great hour before dinner, and four good hours after dinner, in which he would be able to taste the full measure of his enjoyment. On the way to his sitting-room he met the housekeeper, who told him that he would be alone at dinner. Mr. Simson had wired that he and Mr. Smith were dining in town. Bernard laughed.

He shut the door of his room. He stirred the fire into a blaze, and, leaning against the mantelpiece, looked with delight at his room. The Unknown Lady seemed to welcome him; he saw the mystery of her sightless eyes, for ever fixed on something beyond and above him; he saw her calm loveliness, and felt that she was the quiet queen of the realm of beauty into which he was sometimes allowed to enter, into which he was about to enter now.

He knew quite well what he was going to read; but he waited a little to linger over the strange joy of expectancy, to remember the bad days when the Unknown Lady seemed a clay bust, a cold stranger—and when he knew himself to be below appreciation of anything.

> **And though she saw all Heaven in flower above**
> **She would not love.**

But now he was responsive to the appeal of beauty, and he felt that he was himself creating something beautiful by his human recognition of its presence, by his glad welcome.

From the shelf he took down the odes of John Keats. His hand almost trembled as he opened the book, and he gave a deep-drawn sigh of pleasure as he began to read. They had all the surprise of freshness and all the lustre of intimacy. He became one of the little clan who are able to give to great verse the simple worship which makes them rich. He followed Apuleius the Platonist, and kneeled at the shrine of the goddess Psyche,

and, breathless with awe, he passed a little way into the faded hierarchy of Olympus. He heard the song of the Nightingale, and understood its gentle meaning for the first time, as it seemed to him; he saw the casement slowly moving open . . . he was present at the year's gradual death, and realised the wonder of the old earth's awakening in the spring. Here, where men sit and hear each other groan, he, at peace with beauty, was near to the deep heart of things, and listened to its rhythmic throb of meaning.

It is difficult to understand what power there was in the child's eyes to have influenced him in this way. He cared for some children immensely. But why did not his love lead him to be sorry for the miserable condition of dirt in which this child probably existed, to lamentation about the many children who are neglected and ill-treated, instead of leading him to his present exaltation? Perhaps he felt that for a moment he had been allowed to penetrate below mere human conditions to humanity. If he felt that, it was in-

stinctively; he put no problem to himself; he was only conscious of having received in some way a great gift, which he was very glad that he could appreciate. He valued the gift no less because it and its giver were inexplicable—part of the mystery which involves life. Men stand or fall by their attitude towards the Unknown; its influence is uplifting or deadening, a burden or an incentive.

Bernard spent as little time over dinner as he could without appearing to slight the efforts of the housekeeper to please his palate. He praised the lightness of the apple-tart's crust and hurried back to his room.

There he extracted from a drawer a book which was very precious to him. It was wrapped in crumpled tissue paper. The binding was old—dull crimson leather with quaint emblems worked in gold. Inside was chiefly blank paper of exquisite quality, and about forty of its three hundred and fifty pages contained his attempts at cheirography. The first letter of each paragraph was illumi-



nated; the writing of the rest was only marked by a kind of ideal neatness and regularity. This was his hobby. He had two books of the kind. One contained extracts in prose and in verse. But the other contained a novel which he was making. The novel he looked upon as " his work " in that part of his nature which was most sacred to himself. He had written a novel which had been published and reviewed in short sentences, hinting in some instances at promise. It still, however, seemed to him such a piece of impertinence that he should dare to write that he crept about the business like a malefactor, and hid his preposterous identity under a pseudonym. What troubled him was not his wish to write (writing gave him joy, and everything that could give joy he knew to be good), but the desire, which he stigmatised as insane, to see his work in print, and his belief that other people might read his work, and perhaps even obtain pleasure from reading it. His real wish was—and this he never owned to himself even; he could not stand up to its monstrous pro-

portions—his real wish was to reform the world.

He was what is called very young. Up to the present he watched everything with incoherent amazement, and he watched himself with more interest than was quite necessary. Life to him was a tangle of horror and wonder and joy. He kept turning round and round in a small circle, and did not advance because he knew no direction. He was without any definite purpose or goal. He was just aware of this purposelessness and the lethargy which it entailed. He felt as though a large spider were slowly winding a web more and more closely round him, that his arms were gradually becoming fastened to his side.

This evening he saw more clearly than hitherto how he vacillated from spiritual ecstasy to spiritual abasement. Both were weakening and useless. He got no motive power from either. And he needed motive power . . . for what ? What was he going to do with his life ? The mere enjoyment of beauty, such as he had been enjoying, was good, but insuffi-



cient. He feared to lose the capacity of appreciation. Longer and longer intervals separated his lucid moments.

He heard the front-door shut with a slam; and, knowing that it was Cecil Williams' manner of entry, he wrapped up his book without having written anything and put it back in the drawer.

"Do you mind if I come in?" asked Williams.

The question required no answer. Williams came in and settled down in an arm-chair with the friendly smile of one who confers a favour graciously.

Some men cannot appear to be comfortable in a chair unless their clothes instantly resemble a collection of oddments from a rag-shop, unless every hair of their head is ruffled. Williams sat in perfect ease, looking as comfortable as he felt. He always rose from the longest, lowest chair as uncrumpled and as unruffled as he issued from his bedroom in the morning. Deliberately he crossed his legs after he was seated, and did not move again. He

never gesticulated. One forearm lay along each arm of the chair.

"Have you ever read the odes of one John Keats?" said Bernard, putting the book back on to its shelf.

"Yes; also most of William Shakespeare and some of the Bible. Why?"

"I've just been reading them again."

"And never seemed to have read them before, eh? I know the kind of thing. You've never finished. I read a thing once and pass on to something new. Life's too short for endless brooding. But I want to talk to you about our Ephraim."

"What's the matter with him?"

"Don't be alarmed! nothing serious. Could you let me have a cigarette? Thanks," he went on, taking a cigarette from the proffered box and tapping it thoughtfully on the back of his hand. "Ah! thank you; how attentive you are!" He leaned forward to light the cigarette. "Poor silly Ephraim! It's just the kind of thing that would happen to him. It's always the fool who is bitten."



"What do you mean? Don't be so damnably nonchalant!"

Smiling to see that Bernard was reaching the proper pitch of interest in his news, Williams proceeded, with the same leisurely composure: "*C'est une histoire*, my dear Bernard, don't spoil it by interruption," and he flicked the ash off his cigarette into the fire. "Our Ephraim set out like a lion in search of prey—from the place at which he had been dining at Soho with me—actually with me. A fair vision walked towards him: two words, 'Well, darling,' sufficed. Bold and brave and knowing, he asked my pardon for his desertion and escorted the vision to its home."

"Oh, drop it!" cried Bernard, laughing and sick with disgust. His laugh was mirthless and loud. Williams watched him with considerable interest. He wanted to know how shocked Bernard would be. But Bernard was not shocked in the way that Williams expected. With difficulty he mastered a feeling of physical repulsion, not against Smith, whom he disliked, but against Williams, to whom he was attached,

for his manner of recounting Smith's misfortune. Then he spoke with great seriousness, pacing the room.

"I don't think it's the least funny; it's all so mean and disgusting, the whole rotten business! And how's a man to get experience? For God's sake, don't sit there like an imperturbable cat! What's the use of all this infernal desire in us? What is it? Good or bad? God's power, or Devil's lure?"

"My dear Bernard, before I can discuss the ethics of this grave question I really must ask you to own to the humour of our poor silly Ephraim's having any passions at all."

"Yes, damn funny—ha! ha! About as grotesque as anything else in this muddle we call life."

"My dear Bernard . . ."

"Don't apostrophise me like a blasted father. I can't stand your infernal suavity, your . . . your . . ."

"Suavity is good. A devilish useful quality, too, in this life which you most properly dub a muddle. You see, hysterics—pardon the

word—however fine, are never of much practical good. It's nice to invoke God and the Devil, but the question remains the same after you have done so. Personally I see no great difference between one bodily function and another."

"Anyhow, that's absurd; look at the consequences, the power, the vast importance . . ."

"Believe me, that is so vastly exaggerated by the imagination and morality."

"And it's so wrapped up with the . . . with the soul . . . the very character suffers. . . ."

"My dear fellow, stop any other bodily function and see how the soul fares."

"You mean to say health is the only thing that matters?"

"Exactly. Health comes first; the rest is luxury. Let a man see that his body is sound, then let him, if he has the time and the energy, turn his attention to his soul. You are, I am afraid, in a bad state of nervous irritability. A doctor would suggest marriage. Drastic, but . . ."

Bernard pulled up the blind with a clatter

and threw open the window to its widest. "It's abominably stuffy in here," he said, and leaned out into the fresh air. The moon was shining. Frost lent a peculiar tinge of blue to the sky, which he noticed.

Williams shivered. He smiled to himself, "Oh! you idealists," and experienced a genuine feeling of pity for his friend. Aloud he said:

"I have offended you. We will not speak about the matter. Please be so obliging as to shut the window."

Bernard shut the window and lowered the blind again gently. He came and stood by the fireplace before he answered.

"No, you haven't in the least. Only the whole thing's a mystery to me. I don't know anything whatever about it. I can't even be honest with myself. I simply don't know what I want or what I mean. So, of course, I lose my temper."

Williams liked Bernard's sudden change of attitude, his frankness, his excitability; for one thing, it served to throw his own composure



and common sense into agreeable relief. Bernard sat heaped in his chair, utterly unconscious of the absurd appearance his rough hair gave to his face, which Williams did not fail to observe with amusement. He smoothed his own carefully: the parting was as faultless as when he left the barber's in the morning, and he knew it. Presently he got up and, thoughtfully pulling down his waistcoat, said: "Mind you take care of yourself in this wickedest of all possible worlds. Good night," and left the room.

"Good night," said Bernard as the door shut.

But Williams came back again almost immediately.

"Stupidly enough," he said, annoyed at his forgetfulness, "I quite forgot something I particularly wanted to say. I met Conrad Leith this afternoon—you know the man I mean. I have spoken to you about him and to him about you, and he wants me to bring you on Thursday evening to his rooms. Dine with me first, will you, and come? Leith's a

man you ought to know. And you are likely to meet quite interesting people there."

"Thanks awfully, I should like to come immensely," said Bernard, without stopping to think.

"Good." He made an entry in a small book which he took from his waistcoat pocket. "Club, seven-thirty. You need not dress."

"Right. Thanks awfully."

"Don't sit up late."

What is it that makes some days in life stand out in spite of the absence of any remarkable incident, such as a railway accident, or a burglar in the bedroom, or a proposal of marriage? Bernard felt something portentous about this day of his life. He found his engagement book under a heap of papers on the table, but instead of entering dinner on Thursday as he intended, he slowly drew an elaborate St. Andrew's cross against this Tuesday.

II

IT happened that they were all down to breakfast next morning together—Simson by chance, Linnell intentionally, Smith and Williams as a matter of course, because they started early. Linnell wanted to show Smith how sorry he felt for him, but the effort was a failure. Smith was far too engrossed in himself to notice anything. He looked haggard and uneasy. But he did his very best to appreciate the gay little taunts of Williams, whom he admired, and to hide his misery under a devil-may-care swagger, which sat on him as aptly as a peacock on a scarecrow.

Linnell's dislike increased every moment. He felt disgust not so much for Smith as for the phase of life which he called continually to mind. He sickened to think for how dreary a period this kind of thing would be the stock

subject of conversation and innuendo. No one seemed to think the matter of any importance. Simson was severe—as with a small boy who was in danger of becoming a nuisance.

All day Linnell was oppressed by a weight. He wondered what evil sprite had ever induced him to go to the Museum, or lured him into the sociable freedom of the bachelor establishment. He wanted to get right away, to travel from town to town, anywhere, so long as he could see new faces, new people: he wanted to be alone, until the horror of loneliness came and grinned at him like an evil creature, and he felt the spider's web closing on him, tight to suffocation.

He forced himself about nine o'clock to look in on Smith. He knew that Smith always regarded a visit from him or any one as a favour, because he had nothing whatever to do with his spare time. Bernard always felt that he was doing a kindness when he spent an evening with Smith, and was irritated beyond measure that Smith had so little spirit as to think so too, and to show it in his manner.



All Smith's airs of bravado had gone. He began to tell Bernard about his misfortune before he had been in the room four minutes, and he cried as he told it, so much that he could hardly speak. He felt disgraced for life, he said, and quite unable to look his mother or any pure woman in the face again. He moaned that he was not really an evil-liver, that he would never sin again; and Bernard failed to make him understand his point of view that the desire to buy love was more horrible than the consequence of doing so, a desire which every young man knew. Smith could only cry like a burned child, and beg Bernard on his knees almost not to turn away from him in disgust. Then he showed Bernard a list of things which Simson—that magnificent man!—had written down in his methodical manner: things which he must do or not do, eat or not eat, drink or not drink. With a friend like Simson no man who was worth his salt need have gone wrong; with a friend like Simson no man had an excuse for doing so; without Simson . . .



So Bernard endeavoured to divert Smith's thoughts from the painful channel of his misfortune to the comforting virtues of Simson. But the poor little fellow refused all comfort: he much preferred to revel to the full in his own misery and wickedness. Bernard listened with as interested an expression as he could assume for an hour, and went back to his room stifled with Smith's thanks for his kindness in visiting a polluted creature.

Smith's conscience, indeed, was more sick than his body. In a subtle way, common to the weak, he found consolation in exaggerating his own turpitude, thereby lessening his chance of doing better in the future. All the strength which he wasted on self-recrimination was sorely needed to carry out an eighth part of the good resolutions with which the recrimination was interlarded. Bernard half thought that only the calamity affected Smith, not in the least the action itself or the state of mind which made the action possible. If he had thought so entirely, he would have done Smith no injustice; for Smith was, in reality, only

suffering from a bad attack of self-pity, which is, be it noted, one of the most perilous diseases in the catalogue.

Bernard in his room dismissed Smith with a silent and sincere "Poor devil"; but he thought much, and with small result, about the question of which Smith was a pitiful example. He was retarded by lack of knowledge, and his thoughts turned in a painful circle, like a bee with a broken wing.

His position was a difficult one. He detested celibacy almost as much as he loathed promiscuity, and marriage seemed like a hideous trap, which closed on a man and held him for the rest of his life. He was not a coward. He had always done his best to face things and to be honest with himself. In his early days at college he found himself obsessed with the idea of splendid sin (purple was the colour) and gorgeous *filles de joie*. So one day, not wishing to act against his reason, he resolutely went to a brothel. That was extremely characteristic of him; he said, as it were, to himself: "You desire this: good: you shall see what it's like."

He perfectly realised his inordinate fear, the sickening revolt of his soul at the whole business, and the pleasure, such as it was, that he obtained. He was not in the least sorry for what he had done, but he was convinced that that, the easiest solution, was, to put it simply, no good to him. And yet his celibacy was, he knew, exaggerating one side of life for him beyond all comparison with its importance, and influencing his mind unmercifully.

From other, more sentimental, experiences he had learned less, with one exception. He had been the lover of a woman older than himself. For a moment he had had a glimpse, to which everything in him responded, of what love might mean. The vision had been impressed upon him by a year of keen suffering: the impression was taken and kept. She had become his intimate friend, and she was dead.

In some ways he was very old.

He desired not to violate any part of his personality. And as some part of him, it seemed, must be violated, he determined it should not be the highest part, or what he

considered the highest. But he could not understand why a woman, who once asked him if he loved her, was insulted when he said that he did not love her, but thought that her body was lovely and desirable.

And now he laughed to observe his resemblance to the blameless hero of romance written for special Sunday reading, a resemblance quite intimate compared with his difference to the brilliant modern Frenchman, whom he read with interest and whose standpoint was incomprehensible to him. He could not be serious without the light of humour; and all he obtained from his meditation was a little amusement at his own expense, and a slight sinking in his own estimation because he was unable to find any solution for the problem.

Fastidious and incomplete were the epithets that described him in his own opinion. And, after all, as far as he was concerned, it was a contest in which the tactics of Fabius were the best. *Cunctando* should henceforth be his motto. Perhaps by the time he was an old man and ready for his grave he would know a

little more about life and have done some work.

He did an hour and a half's work, which was just enough to prevent him from sleeping for two more hours, and went to bed.

His first idea in the morning was how to escape from the dinner with Williams and the subsequent meeting with — what was the fellow's name? ah yes, Leith, and a poor name at that. What could have possessed him cheerfully to assent to such a plan? Williams, of course, he liked—they had been friends at college—but a friend of Williams . . . some clever ass . . . and to-day, when he felt particularly disinclined to see any one! Where had the absurd theory originated that he liked seeing people? In reality he knew he cared for almost nobody, and was shy and uncomfortable in company. The moods in which he wanted to see people were of such rare occurrence that they were not worth considering; generally, too, they came on him when he was alone in his room, and it was quite impossible for them to be gratified.

He was annoyed that Williams appeared not at all surprised at his tentative efforts to back out of the arrangement—in fact, seemed rather to expect as much, and quietly put all objections on one side.

"Anyhow, we will dine. I want you to sample some new Burgundy which the club has laid down," Williams said, and his manner gave Bernard the idea that he was being handled like a child. Disinclination developed during the day. He pencilled wild wires on scribbling paper, rolled them into little balls, and filliped them into the paper basket. Amused resignation eventually came to his succour.

He took a sherry and angostura, and was immensely tickled by two young men in the bar. Their sole claim to distinction, manifested in their bearing and dress—such bearing, such dress!—was based on an apparent capacity for talking with practised familiarity to any barmaid. Bernard envied the gift, but could not even attempt to emulate it. Any lady behind a bar was far too capable and business-

like to waste a word on him. She looked right through him at one glance.

He sat down to dinner in capital spirits. They decided that the Burgundy was "right," and discussed the soul of the barmaid.

About nine they started to walk along the Embankment to the Temple.

"Tell me about Leith," said Bernard.

"Conrad Leith," said Williams, and sighed. "What shall I tell you?"

"How old is he? What does he do? What's he like to look at? Juggins?"

"Over fifty. Nothing. You will see."

"What makes you think I'll like him, or he me?"

"He talks about beauty as though it were his mistress, or rather as though he understood what he meant."

"That sounds all right."

"He is one of those unfortunate men who continue to behave like boys."

"What do you mean—unfortunate?"

"To have enthusiasms at his age is as pathetic as for a grown man to be laid up with

the measles. But I quite like to see him occasionally; his intellect is fair, and he knows some useful people. You will certainly like him. Devotees of beauty always want to clasp another's hand. Their worship is a sort of hysteria each catches from the other."

"Yes; there's not much market value to it. What's so queer is that if one could subtract the sneer from your remarks the remainder'd be found to contain an amazing amount of truth."

"Thank you. Without such mental arithmetic you will find out their truth when you are as old as I am, which you will never be."

"Taking the reincarnation system, you'd say you were about two lives in advance of me . . ."

"Five would be nearer my computation."

"And the funny thing is that I'm convinced you're at least ten lives behind me. You see, you're blind to beauty."

"And you to reason."

"Beauty is the light of progress."

"That is nonsense. All the progress human-

ity has made is to discover about six new natural facts—electricity, sterilization of marriage. You can count electricity equal to about four facts."

"Yes, but . . ." And a stream of ideas trailed gleaming through his mind, like the row on row of lights which were reflected in the river and seemed to move slowly along with the river's current. They eluded his power of language, and remained phantom lights for all their brilliance, because he was unable to do anything but wonder at their reflection in his mind. He felt that there might exist a man (certainly never Williams) to whom he could talk of these things; and if he found him, he would struggle by the attempt at expression nearer to . . . nearer to . . . what? In his world everything was vague and cloudy. To Williams nothing existed that he could not put into exact words. How convenient to hold the precise measure of things, and how unconscionably dull. "I can't be coherent," he finished.

"Well, never mind."

"If I could say what I meant . . ."

"You would revolutionise kingdoms, eh?"

"My God! I believe it would make a difference."

"Why don't you write a novel? Only about three thousand appear annually."

But Bernard was thinking—very much, as it appeared to him, like the aged man on the gate—of a line, one word of which evaded his memory. The line was "It forwards the general . . . of man." "Good," no; "purpose" would not scan; "plan" would be dissonant. He tracked it in his mind without avail. He saw the exact place on the page in the Browning selections, where it occurred—left-hand page, towards the top: "Be hate that fruit or . . ." It was a memorable verse, which he must certainly look up directly he got home.

"Conrad Leith," said Williams, and sighed. "He doats about everything young. He is kindhearted to the verge of mania. He has a ward. A dull, superior girl with extravagantly large eyes and no figure. I am certain that he

thinks her a heaven-sent genius. Sings prettily, when she remembers the tune. He is always reading modern novels, and is as pleased when he finds what I believe he calls 'a true word' as if he had made fifty pounds. An astonishing creature in many ways."

"Are your judgments ever wrong?"

"Very rarely," said Williams, and they left the Embankment for the little ascent to the Temple.

As they climbed the stone steps of the buildings Bernard decided that he would like to live in the Temple—it reminded him of college; but the thought of returning late at night to this cold, echoing loneliness made him decide that he would not like to live there—yet. That picture was so vivid to his imagination that the answer to the little raps of Williams took him by surprise.

"Ah, Williams, I'm delighted to see you and your friend Mr. Linnell—capital, capital; just leave your coats on this table, will you, and come in," said Conrad Leith, and all Bernard could notice was that in walking into



the room—where in obscurity he stood waiting to give them a further welcome—he took a longer step with his right than with his left foot, and this gave an odd, butting appearance to his gait. He made his way rather than walked.

Conrad Leith put a hand gently on Bernard's shoulder as he introduced him to a man in the room—a short, stout, shaggy man—by name Mr. Jeremy Cleese, who said, "Pleased to meet you, sir," in a loud voice, and blew his nose just as Bernard was about to volunteer a remark about the Thames at night.

"Ah, that's capital, capital!" said Conrad Leith, and rubbed his hands together, stooping a little forward and smiling, as though something very pleasant had happened.

"Conrad Leith, you're an infernal optimist, my dear fellow. How do you know we shan't be anxious to cut each other's throat in another fifteen minutes? I never heard an opinion of Cecil Williams that I did not execrate, and I suspect this tall young man of being a firebrand—don't contradict me, sir."

But Bernard was too occupied in observing the room to do anything but start at such a wild supposition. The room was spacious. One corner was lined with bookcases; in the other stood a large oak table covered with books and papers. Blue and brown—the brown of polished oak—were the colours: sombre without being dingy. He felt somehow that good work was done at that table. . . .

"So you like my room," said Conrad Leith, smiling at Bernard. "I'm going to fetch coffee." As he passed Cleese he gave him a very gentle dig in the ribs, of which Cleese took no apparent notice. He continued a fierce argument with Williams until Leith came back with a tray. Nor did the taking and holding of coffee-cups create any hindrance. The more Cleese blustered—he blustered agreeably, like a wind on a moor in May—the more courteous Williams became.

"Don't you think so?" cried Cleese suddenly, anxious to obtain Leith's support.

"Most certainly," said Leith, and wheeled an arm-chair up to Bernard, so that they were

a little separated from the other two. Somehow his doing so pleased Bernard.

"You write?" he asked, leaning forward.

"What makes you think that?" said Bernard uneasily.

"Observation, and some remarks of your friend Williams. Very able man, Williams."

"Yes, very; we were at college together."

"Ah, really. I wonder now if you came across a boy named Hoskins—Teddy Hoskins?"

"Yes, rather; he was called Cupid. I should think so."

"Look here, Conrad Leith," broke in Jeremy Cleese, striding up to him, "I refuse any longer to be isolated with this outrageous Williams, however much you may desire to burble about Cupid and Campaspe with this young man."

"What's Williams been saying? You seemed so deep . . ."

"Deep be damned; this cold-blooded rascal, this outrageous machine masquerading as a man, this . . ."

"The point in dispute," said Williams, "is whether an artist needs actual experience of a subject before handling it; for example, whether a novelist must be an habitual drunkard before he can write about an habitual drunkard. I hold that in so far as he is an artist and no photographic recorder, that is where instinct and imagination help him to understand without any experiment."

"O monstrous Machiavel, you reduce my case to absurdity with hellish ingenuity . . ."

"Mr. Jeremy Cleese," said Leith to Bernard, "is Senex in a well-known halfpenny but high-class paper; he has formed the habit of invective owing to the success of his weekly articles."

The great red face of Mr. Cleese beamed benignantly on Bernard.

"Liar," he said to Leith, "smooth-tongued liar. The habit is me." He put his red ungainly hand on Leith's shoulder with great tenderness, and turning to Bernard, went on. "Mr. Conrad Leith discovered that I was at the end—hungry. So he sat me down on my

behind and made me—simply made me—write a vitriolic great dashing article about everything and nothing; he took me by the unwashed scruff of my blasted neck, and planted me on the staff of that filthy half-penny rag. Me, a dramatist, curse you, Conrad. We'll build a theatre one day, my boy. And then we'll tickle 'em up a bit, and journalism can go to the devil, its dam, and suckle Cerberus."

"Your clever change of subject assures me that you give up opposition," said Williams blandly.

"Oh, papa, potatoes, poultry, prunes, and prisms, I don't," shouted Cleese.

"Or that you are leading the conversation round to the reading of the last act of your last dramatic masterpiece. Your breast-pocket bulges ominously."

Jeremy Cleese opened his mouth and vented a tremendous laugh. Williams did not smile.

"It's an interesting question," said Leith.

"Not as that iniquitous rascal states it," laughed Cleese. "Listen to me."

"You'd better write an article against Williams," suggested Leith, rubbing his hands.

"Write an article against Cecil Williams! Why, Heaven help me, I've never written anything that hasn't been against Cecil Williams. He's the living type of all that is most abhorrent to me in modern life. He is the very incarnation of the Blatant Beast, against whom I spend all my terrific energy in tilting. He stands for all that is cold and calculating and cheap and cynical and safe . . ."

"Your case is generally a cocoon of abuse, Jeremiah," said Williams.

"If the beggar were stark naked on a desert island, he'd talk to the gulls with exactly that punctilious peep; and he'd drape himself in that artificial sham atmosphere of gentlemanly superiority, and be at ease with the owner of the smartest yacht that ever sailed, and the owner's wife, when they chanced to pick him up. Upon my immortal soul, I find it almost impossible to curl my red tongue over the word which is the key to our discussion, in his egregious presence. I maintain . . ."

"And no sane man would disagree with me," placidly interposed Williams, as though quoting a formula from an article.

"And only an ass obdurate to the verge of insanity would dare to deny it, that no man who has not experienced love is able to write a true word about love."

"Ah," said Conrad Leith, "it's a relief to have got it at last. Linnell and I were hardly able to bear the nervous strain of suspense."

"I . . . I . . . should think . . . capable of . . . of . . . feeling love is what is . . . what he must be," said Bernard. He was excited. He felt constrained to shake both Cleese's hands. Something in him raised its head and cheered to hear the denunciation of Williams. Conrad Leith rubbed his hands together and looked at Bernard in a way that said, "Dear boy"; but Bernard did not see the look.

"Few men, surely, are incapable of that," suggested Williams with a smile.

"You see?" cried Cleese, leaping to his feet. "Why does no thunderbolt strike him

to a clinkered cinder? He speaks of love as if its manifestations began and ended with the body."

"I have trodden on a nest of idealists, I am afraid," said Williams. "Love is sexual attraction, which every healthy man feels, and which every healthy man who can write at all can describe. You would call love the affinity of twin souls, eh?"

Bernard sat waiting for a great utterance, which would settle the Williams view for ever. But Cleese stopped pacing up and down the room, and bending over Williams pinched the lobe of his ear and said:

"I suspect a man with your power of sneering capable of any infamy . . . even of writing a book under a false name, than which I know no more heinous piece of cowardice."

Bernard smiled a sickly smile, and Williams said:

"A hundred years ago, Senex, instead of being able to enjoy your amiable rodomontades, I should have been obliged to stick my sword through you in a duel. My honour now

is saved by the satisfaction of knowing that I have worsted you in argument."

"How long shall I continue in the idiocy of trying to point out the beauty of colour to the colour-blind!" said Cleese, and rapping his fist against his forehead, gave a bad imitation of a groan. Bernard uneasily wondered why it should be cowardly to employ a pseudonym, and felt uncomfortably like a smacked puppy.

"You must find that a valuable formula under which to hide your incoherence. I wonder how many times I've been told it."

"Not enough to make you believe it, at any rate."

"No; only to weary me of it," answered Williams, and rose, immaculate.

Bernard enjoyed the contrast as he saw him stand by Cleese, a little more than a head taller than the irascible shaggy dramatist. Williams was the same height as Bernard, but held himself more erectly.

"The boy has a sensitive, delightful face," thought Conrad Leith, looking at Bernard, "an acquisition."

"I am obliged," said Williams, "to look in upon a man at the National Liberal."

"National Liberal, that's my way, if you can be seen walking with a cross between a brigand and a socialist," laughed Cleese.

"Certainly, in the obscurity of the Embankment. Your company will not be disconcerting."

"You're not going to the N.L.C.?" said Leith to Bernard, who got up.

"No, but I really ought to be off."

"Oh, nonsense, why? I want to talk to you. There's the tobacco-jar."

So Bernard sat down again, and began to fill his pipe, while Conrad Leith loosed the two others into London. He came back rubbing his hands and smiling. His smile seemed to emphasise the expression of his face.

"Now then, that's capital, capital," he said, in such a way that Bernard quite believed him, and agreed in his own mind enthusiastically.

"Jeremy Cleese is a splendid fellow. I'm glad you met him." He was walking about the room, apparently in search of something.



Bernard found that his odd walk was most pleasant. For some reason it seemed to illustrate an attitude towards life.

"I do write," said Bernard suddenly. "I've had a novel published under another name."

"Oh, ho!" cried Leith, continuing his search, "then old Jeremy got you one in the eye—a nasty one."

"Do you think it's cowardly . . . ?"

"Not a bit, not a bit, in seven cases out of ten. Ah! here it is." He picked up a book, hurriedly turned its leaves and read:

> "But looking up, at last we see
> The glimmer of the open light,
> From o'er the place where we would be:
> Then grow the very brambles bright."

"For some reason it kept buzzing in my brain; our friend Williams would think that nonsense. Know Morris? Well, read him. Tell me about the book."

He threw himself into an arm-chair, and bending his head a little looked at Bernard above his eyeglasses with a smile that was in kindliest contrast to his abrupt manner.

"It was called 'Captive Good.'"

"Ah, ha, I've read it. Good. At work on another?"

"Yes . . . I am."

"I envy you beggars with the power to express yourselves."

"Why can't one say what one wants to say? I mean . . . Look at Williams now to-night . . . he went away with the last word; he always does; he's coherent; he's explicit. I feel what he says is absolute rot, and there it is . . . it's unanswerable."

"Oh, well, I don't know about that. It's sound common sense, you know. Personally I respect a man like Williams. You see, really very few people feel like Browning or like Shelley; and the mischief is when they try to; when they have glorified notions, quite unnatural to them. Anything's better than that sentimental romantical flummery. People who have deep feeling are rare, and they're pretty well able to look after themselves in the long run. And then, you see, it matters so little to the Williamses; it's more than phrases



to us. It takes two to tell a truth. The colour metaphor is quite a good one."

"What is love? You may know. I don't. I don't know. All I do know is that to me his idea is disgusting and narrow. I say to myself that love is the expression of the divine. I feel it is. I utterly know it is. But I don't know what I mean by it. Why is it divine? What is there in it that is divine? I don't know."

"It's such a personal matter, my dear boy."

"And its hideous physical importance; and yet in a way it has nothing to do with the body."

"The body is surely the medium . . . the instrument from which the music of the spheres may come."

"But how?"

There was a silence. Then Conrad Leith spoke:

"You can't really keep things apart in little partitions. I'll tell you what my idea is—what is true to me. There is no universal answer, I believe, to this or any other of the great questions—only a personal answer. I look

upon life as one vast inseparable whole. Man has evolved consciousness. He realises at first that he comes from the dark and goes into the dark. His consciousness helps or hinders his growth, according as his will and knowledge (in other words his soul) keeps his ray of the universal life in harmony with the great light of all life. Growth is the widening of consciousness—the struggle for immortality. That great light which pervades every living thing is my idea of God; the storehouse of all strength. Therefore everything which brings a man in touch with other rays of the great light, other manifestations of God, is good, and everything which isolates him is bad. When you see a ray of that light you see something beautiful, under whatever ill or dead thing it may be hidden. That particle of light is a man's truth. I'm afraid I'm horribly obscure."

"I think I see," said Bernard a little doubtfully. "But how about love?"

"Love is the soul's impulse against isolation, which is one form of death. All religions

seem based on this truth—whether it be the religion of the fighter, which is Mohammedanism, or of the soldier-merchant, which is Christianity, or of the thinker, which is Buddhism. That, by the way, is where religions differ from sects. Their founders have always preached active unselfishness, that God is love; and their followers have often twisted that world truth into an excuse for debauchery or selfishness. Shelley and St. Francis come nearer to the spirit of Jesus Christ than any other men, except, perhaps, the Buddha, who lived some six hundred years before." He got up and walked about the room.

"But I don't know what my light . . . what my truth is," said Bernard, looking into the fire. "I only half know what I want to be. I'm no good; that's what it comes to."

Conrad Leith did not answer. He kept on walking about the room. Then suddenly he picked up a tennis-racquet and said abruptly:

"Play tennis?"

"Rather."

"Well, can you explain the American service to me?"

"It's the opposite to the usual cut, you know."

"Yes, I know that. But how the blazes do you keep it in the court? When I try it, the ball invariably flies at an angle of forty-five in the wrong direction."

Bernard took the racquet and was in the middle of the most detailed exposition of the stroke's beauty, when Conrad Leith abruptly took the racquet away from him.

"I shall never learn it this side of the grave: too tricky for me." And he began to walk about the room. Then he turned on Bernard.

"Look here, my boy, for all that we've been saying, if I had a son or a daughter, I'd ask a fairy providence before everything else to give him imagination. I do believe it's the be-all and end-all. Imagination and vitality and the power of appreciation. Those three gifts are yours. Thank God for them, and don't worry. You're all right."

After some desultory talk the Temple Church clock struck twelve, and Bernard went back to Bloomsbury afraid that he had stayed too long, and promising to come again.



III

WHILE Bernard was listening to Conrad Leith he was carried away by the man's quiet enthusiasm to the conviction that all things would henceforward be simple and straightforward. During his walk back to Bloomsbury—along Chancery Lane—he felt that the evening heralded a new epoch of his life.

But when he awoke in the morning, all that he remembered of the visit was his failure to explain the secret of the American service, and a phrase about one ray of light being in harmony with the great light; and the phrase struck him as abominable, until he thought of a symphony in Blanc Majeur, and then the phrase seemed merely obscure. Anyhow, the whole thing was vague and meaningless. He would have to meet Ephraim Smith at dinner,

and Ephraim Smith was intolerable. He recalled constantly to Bernard all that was disgusting and mean in life.

"Love is the impulse of the soul against isolation," another vile phrase, containing an absurd platitude. Yet life seemed full of strange inexorable forces. What happened to a man during the unconsciousness of sleep? Sleep was a dreadful mystery. As consciousness left him, high thoughts had been his; when consciousness returned, he was tired and depressed.

Bernard was one of those people who never get used to life. He was for ever seeing for the first time facts of everyday recurrence—such as the coming of night and of day and of sleep; such as the lack of control over his mind and body that a man experiences during sleep and while he is waking; such, too, as the growth of his beard. Sometimes these facts impressed him with the grandeur of life, sometimes with his own and every man's helplessness, as though each man lived only on the sufferance of some unknown, terrible power.

And thinking of this, the details of a man's daily uprising appalled him by their pettiness. He hated the dreary little functions of the body—shaving, dressing, eating; he hated to be affected by them all; he felt that he was as much affected by burnt porridge or tough toast or a little razor-cut, as by the loss of a friend. It was the accumulation of these details that made life so difficult.

"Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers," he thought, and wondered if Wordsworth rose brightly every morning to write his Prelude, and having an immense respect for Wordsworth, the blasphemy of the idea amused him, and he was able to laugh at himself. Conrad Leith had doubtless included a sense of humour under imagination. It was certainly the prime gift of a man. Had Wordsworth humour? He must have had, a grim humour, severely controlled. Browning . . . What was that line? "It forwards the general . . ."

He went in his shirt-sleeves along the

passage to his sitting-room, and found the verse—

> Be hate that fruit or love that fruit,
> It forwards the general *deed* of man
> And each of the Many helps to recruit
> The life of the race by a general plan;
> Each living his own, to boot.

"Deed" was incontrovertibly the right word. He chanted the verse over to himself, and went down to breakfast in good spirits for the early morning.

"Well, what do you think of Conrad Leith?" said Williams, who appeared in the dining-room, ready to start, holding his silver-handled walking-stick by the middle.

"Oh, I like him. I stayed much too late. Cleese is an amusing fellow."

"Yes, I believe that he has written some rather good plays."

"I say, do you mind the way he goes for you?"

"Yes. I am flattered by it."

"I'm awfully obliged to you for taking me. I enjoyed the evening immensely."

"My judgment does not appear to have been at fault in this case."

"No," laughed Bernard; "it never is."

"Humanum est errare, you know," said Simson, looking over the top of the morning paper. He always glanced through the leading articles before his breakfast, and violently disagreed with their contents on principle during the meal, if any one was down at the same time and would listen. "How is Ephraim? Either of you seen him this morning? Silly little ass."

"Like Mélisande, he is not happy. He bolted his breakfast and fled," said Williams.

Bernard longed to kick him for continuing to treat Smith's illness as a joke. He knew all protest was vain, and kept silence. Then Sarah came in with the second breakfast, and Williams went off to Chancery Lane, wishing them both a cheerful "good day."

"Of course I had to tell Sarah," said Simson.

"What?"

"Why, about Ephraim."

"I suppose so," said Bernard drearily.

"Yes. She wasn't a bit shocked. She has her views about young gentlemen being young gentlemen, apparently; her version for boys will be boys . . ."

"Oh . . . let's drop it, shall we? What's in the paper?"

"As you like," said Simson, nettled. He was only at the beginning, as Bernard supposed, of what he had it in his mind to say, and did not speak again.

Bernard was thankful when he went out of the room. The more he thought of Conrad Leith, the more he wondered why Williams had been at the pains to take him to the Temple. Surely all Williams's coldness and indifference were a pose. He must have a kind heart. It was an enigma how a man could have such horrible ideas, and do such pleasant things. Why could not Williams see that the qualities which he most despised in his talk were just the qualities which made him the man he really was?

But what kind of man Williams was Bernard

was very far from understanding. He could not get sufficiently away from his own personality. And in consequence he only saw the meeting-point between himself and Williams—just that small part of Williams which was alive in his presence. For the rest he was content to imagine himself in Williams's position, and the result was quite a different man to the reality. It was all that mattered as far as his relationship with Williams was concerned, but whenever he went beyond that in his imagination, he went wrong.

One of the curious facts of human nature is that we find in others (and find without self-deception) what we seek. A man with a vivid personality can rouse up latent qualities so strongly that for the time being he almost creates a new individual. A live man is always a little different with different people, and it is quite natural and right that he should be. It is a sign of vitality, not of weakness. In youth it is most apparent; with widening consciousness it becomes a conscious effort, and part of a man's recognised nature. On

that fact is built partly the axiom that change is life. For people, like places, have their own atmosphere — their own magnetism. Gradually a man eliminates, according to his gradual growth or his gradual decease, the influences to which he will subject himself. The vital consort more and more with the vital, the unsensitive with the unsensitive, the dead with the dead. That is the natural evolution that takes place in a generation. It is a calamity when this natural evolution is impeded; when the law or loyalty bind the living and the dead together in terrible union. A man is forced to be untrue to his present self by loyalty to his past, and the ceaseless strain of falsehood that inevitably ensues wears him to a slow death, not of his body, but of his spirit. For some men and some women seem born with only sufficient spirit to carry them through the first and easiest quarter of their life's journey; then their spirit wavers and wanes like an oilless lamp, and their light is quenched. They become mere frames of cumbrous or discontented flesh. Unpleasant-

ness comes from them, as from a lamp that has gone out. Their presence becomes a mischief. They pollute and cumber the stream of life. They do not breathe the fragrance of life, but the bad odour of death. It is a question of vitality. All vitality is of the spirit, and the spirit cannot rest. If a man live for his own material advancement, it is good; if he live for his own spiritual advancement, it is better; but if he live for the spiritual advancement of mankind, it is best; for then, however insignificant, however mistaken even (it is the desire, the honest desire, that matters) his life may actually be, he gains something of the wider consciousness, and he understands what Christ meant by the Kingdom of Heaven.

So Bernard's mind turned instinctively to Conrad Leith, whose life was a stronger, clearer expression of vitality than his own or that of any one whom he had previously met. Something in him was dimly conscious of this, something that lay behind the worrying thoughts of what should be the next actual

step towards the friendship which he wanted. The shape was just apparent enough to give him something at which to mock, and he laughed at the sudden affection he had for Leith, and at the need he felt for his sympathy. After all, Leith was probably one of those facile rogues who have words for anything, and are affable to everybody because they find it less trouble to be agreeable—the sort of man whom Bernard in his heart abhorred.

Then it occurred to him quite suddenly that the next step was one of singular ease. He could be quite open and sincere with Leith, if he were the man that he thought and wanted. If he were not . . . well, at any rate he was agreeable. Accordingly he decided to go and call on him that very evening, and explain exactly why he had come so soon. Nothing could be simpler. He went.

Not until he was actually in the Temple—too late for his self-esteem to permit retreat—did he think how awkward it would be if some one else were there, and he were unable to explain. He saw himself getting more and

more uneasy, and everything—the idea of this immediate visit, the desire for Conrad Leith's friendship, his whole personality and life—at once seemed a grotesque muddle of impulsive foolishness.

So he was relieved when at the last bend of the stone staircase he saw the large outer oak door of the rooms shut, and knew that Conrad Leith was out. But then, the blank handleless door appeared to be a kind of symbol, and he felt that, after all, it was a great pity; for he could never take another step towards seeing Leith, and he had small hope that Leith, who knew a host of men—really interesting men—would lift a hand towards seeing him.

What had he to give to a man of Leith's age and wisdom? The answer, being Nothing, was not superlatively comforting to him. What had Leith to give him, for that matter? What did one man ever give another? He almost heard the voice of Williams say, "Well, exactly—what?" to his unspoken question; and his tentative reply, "Affection," only increased the proportions of the sneer. He

had now lived, he thought with some dismay, for twenty-eight years, ten of them being years of moderate sentience, and had discovered no answer to the first problems of life.

He did not know wherein his mistake lay. But his mistake was to seek a universal answer where there can only exist a temporary personal answer. There is an odd standard of truth prevalent, what may be called the numerical standard. Let a hundred be the unit. Ninety-five will accept a thing as true because it is the common tenet; two or three will consider it false for precisely the same reason reversed. They labour under the same initial misconception; for truth exists only between each man and his own soul, between his own soul and his God.

Bernard wanted, whenever he came face to face with such questions, to change personalities with almost any one else for a little while. His own life seemed dull and of no consequence. The same difficulties were always confronting him; the same annoyances continued to hurt him; the same things were always happening.

No prospect of any change glowed on his horizon. He shivered before the grey monotony of his future, as he well remembered that he had often shivered before. Where did the great adventures lurk which turned life into the high romance which something in him was still convinced that life might be? His ideal of life was a strong, steady growth of achievement, although his practice of life showed him moments of fierce exaltation and long days of dull monotony; and those moments were separated from each other by an insuperable barrier.

Simson came into Linnell's room after dinner, and did a very nice thing in a very clumsy manner. He apologised for his sulkiness in the morning, and based his apology on his own theory of living together. But he said:

"I know how sensitive you are, Linnell, and had no right to refer to a subject which is, of course, unsavoury to a man like you."

"Oh, I don't know," said Bernard lamely. "I'm sure it's most interesting."

Then, for no imaginable reason, it occurred

to him that the fact that Simson and he were both men, almost of the same age and size, both wearing trousers and subject to the same bodily needs, was frightfully funny. He made no comparison of any kind. He simply saw the fact, and sang :

"Life is a joke that's just begun."

"The 'Mikado' is a wonderfully fine comic opera. I consider that musical comedy so called . . ."

"Simson, what's your idea of life ? "

"What do you mean ? "

"What are we here for ? "

"It's a little difficult to answer off-hand."

"Or at all, perhaps."

"Not a bit; we're here to work. In five years I hope to have enough money to marry on; then I shall find a nice girl—there are plenty of them—and have children and a home of my own, and be a respectable citizen. I've nothing to grumble at."

"Supposing you don't find her . . ."

"Not find her ! Of course I shall. Do you

mean to say a man who's led a clean life like me can't find a girl to marry him? Good heavens, there's no difficulty about that. I know what I want: a healthy girl who knows how to manage a house and can bear healthy children—a girl with no nonsense about her. Of course, it's difficult when a man's played the fool."

"Why?"

"He'd have to tell the girl the kind of fellow he was, and a nice girl might not like it; and small blame to her."

"I thought women liked a man that's . . . a man that's . . . a bit of a rip."

"Not the kind of girl I want. I told Ephraim what I thought of him pretty straight. Silly little ass!"

"Perhaps he doesn't want to marry."

"Every man wants a woman of his own—every man, that is to say, who hasn't ruined his character by unclean living. I can't do with all these new-fangled notions that turn everything into a problem, and make right wrong and wrong right. There's just a moral life and

an immoral life. If a man's a good citizen, he takes a woman and is loyal to her. If he's not, he goes on running after women. Every man would like all the women he can get. It's his instinct. These so-called sex-problems are simply due to the unhealthy imagination of idle people. They bore me to death."

"I should have thought as political economist . . ."

"Societies and classes interest me, the unit does not. I leave him to the psychologist—cheerfully. The normal man is much the same—thank God!—all the world over; the abnormal ought to be put out of his misery."

Sarah came in that moment with a parcel and a letter, which she handed to Bernard. She brushed up the fireplace without speaking and went out of the room.

"I've got some papers to look through," said Simson. "Good night."

"Good night, Simson."

The letter was a great surprise to Bernard and a great pleasure. It was from Conrad

Leith. He glanced through it and then pulled off the string from the parcel (no pianist should do this), which obviously contained a book. The book was "Poems by the Way." The letter invited him to spend the week-end at Woodlands, as a man had "fallen through," and gave full instructions—how to get there, what to wear, and the time of the first train's arrival in London on Monday morning. It ended: "You'd better come. Music, quiet, walking, talking, good air, and I want to see more of you. You should read Morris."

Bernard looked for his paper-knife, but could not find it (he never could), and he tried to cut the leaves of the book with the envelope of the letter, which seemed of tough paper, but was not tough enough. So he read the letter through twice, and using as a knife a postcard which leaned against the clock on the mantelpiece, he proceeded with elaborate care to cut the pages. He had not got half-way up the first page when he opened the book to its widest, very gently, in order to prolong the

agreeable cracking noise, and discovered and liked the distinctive smell which every new book possesses. The index was already cut, and against five poems stood a round pencil dot.

Of course there was nothing to prevent him from going to Woodlands. He would wire early in the morning that he was coming by the train at 2.35, which the letter suggested.

He could not remember anything that had given him greater pleasure than this letter and this present—no, not in the whole course of his life. Never before had anything happened so exactly as he could have wished it to happen. Excitement, full of joy and of confidence, came over him that his instinct and presentiment were thus justified by the event. Occasionally things did happen quite beyond what he could allow to himself to imagine of pleasantness. It would be interesting to know if there were any power which regulated these matters. He wanted something more definite than an axiom, such as Like attracts Like, and less porten-

tously human than the deity, to whom, in his cricketing boyhood, he used to address, with quaint hope of fulfilment, before each delivery in a crucial over, the entreaty, " O God, please help me to get a wicket." He laughed at the remembrance of that and of his enthusiasm for cricket, and immediately an immense wish rose in him to play once more in a school cricket match. Cricket without such keenness was the dreariest of dreary farces when each man played for his own average—not for the side, not for the school; so, for that matter, was everything else in life dreary without keenness. It was the quality of mind a man brought to a piece of work that made it worth doing. Then he saw (and it seemed to him that it was for the first time), he saw with all the surprise of a discovery, that happiness lay within himself.

When Williams was told of the invitation he was amused at Bernard's badly concealed delight.

" How like Conrad Leith ! " said Williams, and sighed. " He actually has affection to

spare for new people at his age, so little has he learned the lesson of life. I expect he wants to marry you to his flat-chested ward. Well, you might do worse. He will always see that she has material comforts. I wonder how much the good fellow is worth? I am afraid that, like all good-natured men, he is an improvident idiot. Still, he is no fool. She must have some money of her own."

"You've settled it all, I see," laughed Bernard. "How do you know she'll be there?"

"She is sure to be there. She lives there. I cannot think why Leith does not marry her himself. Perhaps, after all, she has no money."

"Perhaps he doesn't care for her in that way."

"Ah, of course; I forgot these funny little subtleties."

"I wish Cleese were here," Bernard laughed. "You are a devil! Look here, Cecilia, do you really think that one girl with money is as good as another?"

"I really do, unless one is a boy or an epicure. A girl becomes what a man likes to make her in nine cases out of ten."

"Oh, how I hope to God you pitch on the tenth!"

"Your wish is a friendly one, but will not be gratified. I admire docility in a woman."

"When did you see the ward?"

"Not for some time. She may have improved. She was the heaviest thing I ever took down to dinner. She kept an aggressive silence that made *me* feel uncomfortable. She spoke twice, and each time she contradicted me flatly in a soft voice. I have no use for a sullen girl who is superior. It is bad enough when she has taken a first-class in schools, but it is intolerable when she has not even been to Girton."

"By Gad, I should like to know what you do want from a woman!"

"That is very simple. There are two kinds of women that interest me—the *fille de joie* and the *fille de . . . de famille*. The latter is at the present, I own, of prospective interest. All the

others should be quietly drowned, except the intellectual woman; she should be drowned slowly as a deterrent."

"That's what you say. You're really an affectionate old dear, otherwise I shouldn't like you as much as I do. Have you ever kissed a girl?"

"Yes; it's a customary prelude."

"Oh, you know what I mean: kissed her because you cared, because you had to. . . ."

"My dear Bernard, I should certainly never kiss a girl because I did *not* want to."

"You're a devil!"

"What time do you start?"

"Two thirty-five."

"I hope the weather will be propitious. If the sun shines, you may come back 'engaged.'"

"Don't."

"The effect of November sunshine is quite remarkable."

"Engaged. Ugh!"

"I advise you not to play any tricks with Conrad Leith's ward. She is the apple of his eye. And, for all his free-and-easy ways, you

can take it quietly from me that he is no fool."

"Confound the chap! I don't intend to seduce his infernal ward or any one else. You talk like an ass, Cecilia!"

"Like a man of the world," corrected Williams.

"They're much the same," laughed Bernard. "One to me."

"Two, my dear Bernard, if you like. Where are you lunching?"

"Oh, here. It's on the way to Euston pretty well. I shall ask Sarah to order a cab for a quarter to two."

"Ten minutes' drive. You would have time for a good meal at the station if you left here at two."

"I hate being hurried."

So Bernard was at Euston ten minutes before the train came in and thirty-five minutes before its departure. But a London terminus always interested him, and he spent some time gazing over the novels on the bookstall before he came to the sad conclusion that his own was not

exposed for sale at any price. His spirits were so high that he could have waited an hour at Hunstanton without being depressed. In the train he was too excited to read the papers which he had bought, and determined to take out of his bag "Poems by the Way," which he had packed to read in bed. As he fumbled amongst his clothes horror seized him that he had left some essential garment behind, and he tried to check off what he saw with a mental list. The result was a hopeless confusion of the contents both of his bag and of his mind, and he was obliged to resign himself to the test of dressing for final assurance.

A motor-car was at Rugby station to meet him. The chauffeur asked him if Mr. Cleese were in the train, and when Bernard laughed and said he had not seen him, the man said he was afraid they must wait a few minutes to see. No one, however, came, and they drove off through the deepening twilight.

They did not go into the town at all, but turned to the right under the railway bridge and into the open country. At first there was

a steep hill, and the road wound so much that they were forced to go slowly. But suddenly it seemed that the road shook itself free and straight, sloping gently up and gently down long hills. The wind beat against Bernard's face. He clutched the sides of the seat, not from fear, but from excitement. The rush through the cold air made him long to shout with joy. He felt that he was escaping from the dross of his personality. Nothing could keep pace with such swiftness that had not the wings of life. This speed was a new sensation to him. He had only driven twice in a car before, and then only to Richmond and Hampton Court at an amiable fifteen miles an hour, talking with ladies in the body of the car, comfortably enclosed from even a draught. They swooped along like a—like a—no bird, certainly. The throbbing of the engine and the occasional jolt took away all comparison with any bird, however monstrous. The vibration, however, increased his sense of speed. It materialised this magnificent flight over the earth, but did not take away the strange feeling

that he was being projected through space by some tremendous power. And over this power the intent man sitting by him had complete mastery, for suddenly they were moving slowly as the cows amongst which they were passing, and the thing which had hurled them through the air gently pushed against a cow, and the cow capered and swished her tail, as though resenting an indignity. Then the road was clear again; and again the hedges and trees rushed by them, and the wind pressed hard against his face.

The car stopped and was silent.

Conrad Leith was saying: "Come in, my dear boy, you must be frozen."

While Leith spoke to the chauffeur, Bernard stood by a little wicket-gate, half open. The house stood by the road. All round was an immense view of low, rolling hills like those over which he had been taken. In the sky was the last glow of a sombre winter sunset; a bird cheeped sleepily and fluttered in the leaves of the tall bushes which shrouded the house from the road. After the clamour and dirt of

London, the freshness and peace soothed him like a caress.

"Come, my dear boy, I'll show you your room; be as quick as you can; tea's ready for you in that room, see. . . . Just a cottage bedroom this. I knew you wouldn't mind."

"I did like your asking me to come."

Leith smiled.

"Lucky for me that you could get away. Don't be long."

The room fascinated Bernard. A wood fire was crackling in a fireplace, which was quaint and old, with little ledges on each side of it. He could see up the slanting brick chimney without stooping. The ceiling was low. A great beam ran across it, and brown rafters. Standing on tiptoe, he could just touch the beam with the crown of his head. The windows were latticed . . . a casement opening wide . . . unquestionably.

He went downstairs. The room door opened.

"This way, my dear boy," said Conrad Leith.

He went into the room.

"Let me introduce you. . . . Mrs. Fearon."

Bernard shook hands with Mrs. Fearon.

"And Miss Jacynth Moore."

Bernard shook hands with her.

IV

MRS. FEARON was a tall old lady. Her hair was white with her body's age; her face was bright with her spirit's youth. She wore a plain black dress with a large white fichu, and looked more distinguished than any one Bernard remembered to have seen. She sat erect in a large oak chair with arms, and Bernard wondered why there was no suggestion of stiffness in her attitude, but only of gentleness and of grace, to which every movement bore witness. He noticed the beauty of her hands: the fingers were long and white, and on the middle finger she wore a ring with a large blue stone which was unfamiliar to him.

When Miss Moore stooped to take the kettle off the fire Bernard leant quickly forward with an apology, but she said:

"I always do this, and Great-grandmother makes the tea."

Somehow Bernard felt that he ought to have known as much, and something in the quality of her voice and bearing made him remember Williams's description of her—with indignation. For her voice was as clear as a child's, and she spoke with a child's simplicity. She did not, however, speak again during tea—a fact which Bernard did not observe. He was too interested in wondering why Miss Moore called Mrs. Fearon "Great-grandmother," and why Conrad Leith called her "Princess." She could not be old enough to have a granddaughter even, with her hair up. And yet there seemed a vague connection in his mind between the two names, and it worried him, because he could not discover what that connection was.

Bernard was sensitive to atmosphere, and gradually he was drawn into the mysterious peace which brooded over the room. He slipped very quickly the horny skin of shyness; self-consciousness melted away from him, and

as it did so he left off watching to find out in what relation each stood to the other and themselves, and accepted them quietly as he accepted himself and, indeed, as they accepted him. He was conscious of being himself without any effort or constraint, and of feeling peaceful and happy.

A bond of deep affection evidently bound these three people together, and the influence of that affection came upon Bernard. Men do not only catch diseases from each other.

"Do you like music?" Mrs. Fearon asked him.

"Yes, I do immensely," said Bernard. "But I . . . don't know anything about it," he hastened to add.

As Miss Moore rang the bell Mrs. Fearon said:

"We usually have music after tea."

"Dichterliebe and some Strauss, Miss Pet," said Leith.

A little girl with her hair down her back, wearing a very white apron, came in and began to take away the tea-things neatly and quietly.

"Well, Mary," said the old lady, "how did you get on at school to-day?"

"Quite well, thank you, madam," she said, and dropped a little curtsy.

With immense care she carried out the tray and then the cakestand, and Bernard heard a whisper at the door, "Now your kettle," which pleased him. As she was taking the kettle, Mary said in a breathless voice:

"May I put a piece of wood on the fire, madam?"

And Mrs. Fearon smiled and said, "Yes, dear, you may."

"What a darling!" said Bernard as the door closed on Mary.

"For a great treat she is allowed sometimes to clear away. She is a neat-handed little girl, and it is, I think, a pleasure to see her."

"Yes," agreed Bernard, "it is."

"She'll valet you too," said Conrad Leith, with his peculiar smile. "Now, Miss Pet, we're quite ready."

For answer Miss Moore solemnly put a book into his hands, and running her fingers through

his hair several times (how Williams would like that ! thought Bernard) kissed his forehead and sat down on the edge of the sofa a little above him.

" What's this ? " cried Leith. " Have I got to read ? "

His hair was gently pulled, and Mrs. Fearon explained to Bernard that it was their custom for Conrad to read aloud before the music.

" Always," said Miss Moore.

" Well, if I must, I must."

" He reads very beautifully," said the old lady.

While Leith was reading Jacynth stroked the back of his head. At first Bernard was a little annoyed at this. It leaned perilously toward the soft side. But her action soon appeared quite natural and right, because it was done without the faintest shadow of affectation, with a sort of gentle firmness and child-like solemnity. Conrad Leith endured it with a half-humorous tolerance, as he had endured the prospect of reading aloud. It was only while he was reading that Bernard recognised his

keenness, and in his look after he had finished, as he touched her hand, that Bernard saw how much he appreciated her resolute, gentle caress.

Bernard agreed with the old lady that Conrad Leith read well. He kept the delicate cadence of the verse with a brooding love for the beauty of certain words.

Mrs. Fearon walked to the piano. Conrad Leith moved the standing-lamp nearer to her.

"That's the best place," he said, pointing to a sofa which stretched along the far wall.

"Perhaps it will be too cold," said Mrs. Fearon.

"Oh! no," said Bernard, and he lay down.

Except by the piano the room was in obscurity, and the fire made dim shadows move on the ceiling. Miss Moore began to sing.

Her voice was fresh and clear. Bernard did not know enough about singing to be able to realise how well her voice was produced. He took, like many others, the technical part (eight years' good work) for granted, and wondered, not with entire pleasure, at the expres-

sion with which she sang. Where he expected plaintive sadness there was a note almost of ferocity, which surprised him unpleasantly. He was quite sure that it was wrong, and it certainly was not suggested in the playing of Mrs. Fearon. He was angry with what he considered her lack of understanding, her hardness, when she obviously had every chance of learning the worth of gentleness. Besides, they were essentially songs for a man to sing.

But then she sang a song of Strauss, which affected him deeply. He knew sufficient German to catch the words, "Peace, full of beauty," and "small white house."

"Miss Moore, do sing that again," he cried, hurrying up to her.

"Will you?" asked Mrs. Fearon, looking up at her and caressing her hand.

"I'll try," said Jacynth.

He could not understand how this girl in these perfect surroundings could realise the worry and pain of life. And she must do so, or how could she appreciate "the peace, full of beauty"? He was perplexed.

"You've got that," said Leith.

Her face beamed red with pleasure, and she said in her expressionless, clear voice:

"Yes?"

She went to the fireplace and stood looking into the fire, one foot on the fender.

"Please, Princess," said Conrad Leith, and put the biggest cushion that was in his arm-chair on the floor.

"This is the last sonata but one that Beethoven ever wrote for the piano," said the old lady to Bernard.

"Opus 110," said Jacynth to nobody as she sat down on the cushion. She laid her arm on his knee and rested her face on the bend of her arm. There she sat motionless till the sonata was finished, when she kissed Mrs. Fearon's white hair and went quietly out of the room.

"I'm sure that's his biggest. I always am just after I've heard you play it. That fugue!"

He rose and shut the piano. Mrs. Fearon walked back to the tall chair. She leaned her

head at first a little against the back of it, thinking. Then she sighed and sat in her former attitude.

"Well, now, my dear boy, we separate till dinner at eight. I've an hour's work to do. I expect you have too."

"You must think us very queer people, Mr. Linnell, I'm afraid."

Conrad Leith laughed.

"Oh, he wants to be alone as much as any one."

"Yes, if only—if only to . . . to realise the delight of all this . . ."

"Come on," said Leith, taking his arm.

In the small raftered room the fire was built up with little logs which flamed. The writing-table, which had been standing by the window, was drawn up near to the fire's warmth, and a reading-lamp was on it.

"Mary, you see, has been here," said Leith, looking into the inkstand.

"I did like your sending the book most awfully," stammered Bernard.

"Did you?" said Conrad Leith, and his

face lighted up with a smile. Then, with his hand on the door-handle, he said uneasily, liker a boy than a man: "I say, Bernard, let's drop surnames, shall we?"

"Yes, do let's," said Bernard.

Leith nodded and shut the door.

Over Woodlands was spread an enchantment which Bernard could not understand. Nor did he make any attempt to do so, for part of the spell consisted in a peacefulness of mind which was new to him. The ceaseless irritable questioning, which was his attitude towards most things, had been taken from him. He felt only as though he had cast, perhaps in that swift rush through the air, something of his peevish personality, which he hoped would never close upon him again. He felt smooth and fresh. He felt as though he had been seeking and seeking until this moment, and that now his search was at an end.

A profound pity came over him, as he began to write in his leather-bound book, for people who—like Williams, for instance—had no wish or ability perhaps to understand beauty. He

almost rewrote the part of the chapter which he was transcribing. Even the effort to concentrate was a pleasure, and he saw quietly to the end of his scheme of the whole book with vivid distinctness and with a complete confidence which he had never before known, and which thrilled him. He had often dreamed of a life lived on the plan he saw being carried out at Woodlands. His dream was realised. The actual fact, as he saw it, was more beautiful than his imagination had been able to picture, and his joy at the recognition of this gave him strength and confidence.

Facts are not always hideous.

There was a tap on the door, and the small voice of Mary said : " It's half-past seven, sir, and dinner is at eight."

So he dressed and went downstairs.

The music-room, as it was called, was a large, almost square room with a recess at the far end, opposite the door. The recess was shut off by thick curtains. The dining-room was like his bedroom, a cottage-room with a low raftered ceiling, which opened directly into the kitchen.

And Conrad Leith told him that originally the place was an ordinary cottage, to which the house was added.

"How did you find it?" asked Bernard.

"Well, you see, I'm a sentimental rogue, as Williams may have told you."

"He has," laughed Bernard.

"Ah, has he! I was at school at Rugby, and though I didn't have a specially exhilarating time, I had seven years of boyhood, and got to like open sweeps of country and low wide hills. The idea grew that I should like to live here some time, as a free man, you understand, on my own. And I happened about ten years ago to want a little house in the country, and remembered my boyish fancy, and begad! I found I cared more than ever for the extraordinary feeling of openness you get here, and this queer little place attracted me, and I took it."

"Now we have a motor-car we are within reach of woods or a river," said Mrs. Fearon.

"Don't you like the sea?"

"Not to live by. The sea has a mesmeric

effect on me. I should do nothing all day but watch the waves. I do watch them for a week every year."

"And then all the places by the sea within reach are resorts during the summer," added Leith.

"Where do you go for your week?"

"To some little place in Cornwall usually."

All the commonplaces of the conversation appeared to Bernard interesting and pleasant. The old lady was as alive as Conrad Leith, and Miss Moore's silence, though persistent, was not oppressive. She possessed the gift of listening, which is a good gift. Mrs. Fearon spoke of nothing without imparting to it something of her own gracious vitality, so that Bernard became more and more excited with the number of wonderful things in life to be done and seen. In the old lady's presence, somehow, life did not appear an accumulation of petty details, but a pageant in which the old earth and the great sea and the sky and death took part.

She was in harmony with the magnificent

reality, and the reverence she paid to every form of life gave her dignity. Her voice was beautiful, but there was nothing in her actual words which mattered. Any woman of average intelligence might have used them. That is one of the most ordinary and most magical facts of life, which occurs as often as a remark is made, that some quality of the speaker's character colours the words. Endlessly the same words are being used, and endlessly the same words differ in their significance. The most ordinary facts are often the most staggering, whenever a man, as he far too occasionally may be, is actively conscious of them. A remarkable truth is that many pass through the whole course of existence—with the good earth under their feet and the sky for ever enacting its pomp of change above their heads, and all the wonder of growth and of birth and of love and of death for ever taking place around them—and yet find their day long and dull, and, absorbed by themselves, deliver the opinion that life itself is a wearisome affair.

"Vitality, that's the secret of it," said Bernard. Mrs. Fearon and Jacynth had gone to their rooms, and he was alone with Conrad.

"Of what?"

"Of everything, of happiness, life, this wonderful atmosphere, her beauty."

"Whose beauty?"

"Why, that splendid old lady."

"Ah! the Princess. Yes. We've been friends now for twenty years. She has the strongest, most sensitive nature of any one I've ever known. I thought you'd like her."

He was silent for a little while, thinking. Then he said:

"And pluck! The shining, unwavering courage of that woman! When I think of the hell she's been through . . ." He paused. "There are one or two men I should like to kill."

For a moment his face was set with anger, which Bernard heard in his changed voice. Then his face relaxed, and his voice softened, as he said:

"Yet there she is, you see, there she is.

Who would change anything that had gone to the making of what is rare and beautiful ? "

" Turns necessity to glorious gain," quoted Bernard in an undertone.

" That's it. The hero's achievement. Wordsworth quietly right as usual. He seems to have been born old and wise just as Shelley was born wise and young. Great creatures ! "

" Indifference," cried Bernard, starting off at a tangent. " Senselessness. That's what I can't understand. That's what I hate. Suffocating indifference. I have frightful moods of it. Millions of people seem not to care a fiddlestick's end for anything, not even for their own stomachs."

" How can you tell ? You can't, you know. Knowing how desperately hard it is for many to live at all, mind you, I wonder there's as much kindness and keenness as there is. But then I'm an infernal optimist, as you heard old Jeremy Cleese say. And, as a matter of fact, I am. Men have evolved from monkeys,

and . . . well . . . evolution doesn't stop, you know; the process is still going on. The dreams of two thousand years ago are scientific facts to-day."

"How do you mean?"

"Oh, electricity, you know, and telepathy. The changes that have taken place during the last twenty years, and are taking place now, are stupendous—will be memorable in the history of mankind. All standards are changing, all customs are being tested anew, everything is wavering, as it were, in the balance. Why, boy, this present is the most exciting period that has ever been, except, perhaps, the Elizabethan times, when the actual surface of the world was being discovered. My God, that must have been thrilling, to discover new continents! But the discoveries now being made in the natural world, in the spiritual world, the advance of education, the spread of thought, why . . ."

He stopped and began pacing about the room.

"I'd give something to be alive fifty years

hence, just to see it all," he said, and jingled his keys in his pocket.

"But to live twenty years longer, I must go to bed early, though I could go on talking all night."

"Oh, do!" said Bernard eagerly.

"No good, my dear boy. Read in bed."

And this Bernard did, and went to sleep with the refrain singing through his head:

> Ah! come, cast off all fooling
> For this at least we know:
> That the Dawn and the Day is coming,
> And forth the banners go.

He dreamed that it was bad verse but good poetry; and was wakened by Mary bringing in hot water and drawing the curtains. She put tea on a little table by the bed, and told him that the time was a quarter past nine, and that breakfast would be ready in three-quarters of an hour.

He saw out of the latticed window that a white mist covered the land. The trees dripped, and the birds moved about disconsolately in the bushes.

"I don't go outside the house to-day, I think," said Leith at breakfast. "Yellow fog in London," he added cheerfully.

"Weren't you expecting Mr. Cleese?" asked Bernard.

"Yes, in a way. He has his special room—over the stable."

"The prophet's chamber," said Miss Moore, addressing, as was her wont, no one in particular.

"He sleeps in it by preference to any other," explained Mrs. Fearon. "He likes to climb up a ladder into his bedroom."

"Cleese wouldn't walk a yard, if you're thinking of that. He never does."

"No, I didn't mean . . ."

"I thought you believed in the fetish of air and exercise," said Leith.

"So I do, but . . ."

"Quite right, so a boy of your age ought."

"I always take an hour's walk, whatever the weather—in the country," said Miss Moore.

"Let me come with you," said Bernard bravely.

"I'll be ready at a quarter past twelve. Sometimes a full hour is too . . ." she laughed.

"It is well to have a high standard in these matters," said Mrs. Fearon.

"The mist may rise," said Bernard.

"Probably," said Leith, "but not to-day."

"We're a little acrid this morning, Conrad, I'm afraid," said Miss Moore, taking his hand. And the mist did not rise. It seemed, on the contrary, to thicken; and Bernard began to look upon the walk as a foolhardy enterprise, rashly undertaken. But at twelve-fifteen he was in the hall, and at twelve-sixteen Miss Moore was walking down the stairs. She wore a lace scarf wound round her cap, which seemed to emphasise the childish gravity of her voice as she said:

"If you don't mind, we'll go out this way, and we can fetch Thomas."

"Who is Thomas?"

"My dog."

"Oh! good," said Bernard.

There was no reason why he should have expected to see some stately creature, a mastiff

or a great Dane, or at the least a retriever, but he did, especially when Miss Moore began to unbolt the door of one of the outhouses which surrounded the cobblestone yard. He was not at all justified in his surprise at seeing a small Scottish terrier wriggle its long body in delight at Miss Moore's feet, and then rush silently round the yard, slipping absurdly on the stones at the turn, as fast as his crooked legs would carry him. He had indeed as much reason for any surprise as Thomas had for making a crescent of his tail while he ran. Thomas went twice round the yard, and then became aware of Bernard, and inspected him stiffly.

The mist did not at first affect Thomas. He pursued his strange business in the hedges with all the ardour of a poet in search of truth, only his zeal never flagged for an instant.

Bernard very soon talked himself dry to the perpetual monosyllables of Miss Moore, and smiled at the prognostication of Williams. Very bright November sunshine indeed would be necessary to enable her to see anything of

interest in him. He was pleased to be in her company, and, knowing the fact, explained it as quite natural, since she was closely connected with Conrad Leith and the wonderful old lady. Her silence did not oppress him. It piqued him a little that he had no power to make her talk—not even his confession of authorship roused her—and that was all. The pique was soon lost in wonder at the mystery of the white fog, into which the mist seemed to have developed away from the house.

Space seemed to increase its denseness. Trees loomed suddenly upon them, stretching out gaunt branches like great arms with thumbless hands waiting to grip. The mist appeared to retreat before them, and to advance from behind upon them with a stealthy regularity. The hedges, as they were seen on either side of the road, assumed fantastic shapes, like goblins, caught and stayed in the middle of some mad frenzy of movement into sudden immobility to the very ends of their thin hair, until the two mortals passed, and they might resume their twisted gambollings. Even

the placid cows that gazed at them over gates or through gaps and turned away sorrowfully looked spectral, and the mud crunched under their boots with a clear sound, that was unearthly. The white stillness was haunted and abrupt, as though things were only held back by some mysterious power from leaping into an unexpected life.

"How queer!" said Miss Moore, and looked up at him. He saw that drops glittered, like tiny jewels, on her eyebrows.

"Yes, isn't it?" said Bernard.

She was feeling the spell of it. He knew that by the excitement he heard in her voice and saw in her face. Then Thomas, too, must have begun to feel the influence of the mist, for he stepped along ten yards ahead of them, with his ears cocked and his tail held in a stiff line with his back. Every now and then he stopped to look round him, listening and expectant.

Nevertheless, nothing happened. Miss Moore turned, saying, "Well, perhaps . . ." but she did not finish her sentence, and they

walked back to Woodlands along the same straight road. And around them stretched the mist-hung spaciousness. The near hedges only were within their view.

When they reached the house Thomas was removed to the stable, in order that the mud with which he had managed to cover his person might be rubbed from him with dry straw. The remainder of the day passed with fatal rapidity, and in the same way, prolonged, as on the previous evening, except that the peace of it all was occasionally emphasised, not interrupted, by a grunt from Thomas, who sat firmly on the skirt either of Mrs. Fearon or of Miss Moore, and leaned against them.



PART II

"Joy's a subtil elf,
I think man's happiest when he forgets himself."

I

BERNARD felt little sadness at leaving Woodlands. The memory of all that he had seen and heard was too strong, and the knowledge that the beauty of it had become a part of his life was too convincing, to leave much room for sadness.

In his mind, moreover, an exciting idea was moving. He did not know the exact time of its entry. But the idea was no other than to leave the Museum and to devote all his time to his own work. He intended to think it over and then to discuss it quietly with Conrad Leith. His intention was forestalled; but no matter.

The idea took complete possession of him, and he became quite sentimental about all the things which he might be doing for the last time. He had felt thus when he was leaving school, and when he was leaving college—

but with this difference : now secrecy coloured the event with the rosy glow of adventure.

How long he might have continued to hug the joy of anticipation is doubtful; for his imagination was lively, and would have been content to play happily round the idea for a long time. But one evening, soon after his return, he took the definite step quite without deliberation, and also took another step of which he had not previously thought.

It happened that the four men were dining together, and Simson, at the head of the table, was in great form. He looked upon a chance reunion as an event, and a most pleasant event, which occurred, in his opinion, far too seldom.

He took, as has been seen, an honest pride in the establishment. The envy of men who lived solitary lives or married lives tickled this pride in his scheme acutely.

"Only this morning," he said, continuing his praise of the institution, "Robinson—Montagu Robinson—declared that it was what he was looking out for, and begged me

to find room for him. And I told him, of course, that four was our limit, and that we were all much too comfortable to think of changing. Or do you, Ephraim, find our society dull ? "

" No, oh, no, I should think not indeed," cried Ephraim hastily, and he became painfully conscious that he had been silent throughout the course of the meal. He was filled with distressing fear that this might mean a hint for him to make room for Robinson, of whom he surely ought to have heard. Then, with an effort of very real self-sacrifice, he went on : " But if you're sick of having a fellow like me about . . . I mean . . . you understand."

" Oh, yes," said Williams, with clerical gravity, " we understand. Contamination to pure men like me. Your feelings are highly decorous."

" Well, of course, Smith," said Simson quite seriously, " if you are thinking you ought to go, you might make up your mind about it, as Montagu Robinson would be a good man to have in your place."

Poor Ephraim was cut to the heart. Bernard saw his distress.

"I wasn't . . . exactly . . . thinking of going," he stammered.

Simson took no notice.

"You know Robinson—Montagu Robinson?" he asked Williams in a different voice from that in which he spoke to Smith. There was a note of deference in it, as there should be when one man of the world speaks to another.

Almost before Williams had time to say that he did not know Robinson—Montagu Robinson—Bernard said:

"I'm glad to hear what you say, Simson, because for a long time now I've had it in my mind to clear out, and I didn't want to interfere at all with mutual arrangements."

He was surprised to hear the deliberateness of his own voice. Williams arched his eyebrows.

"You surely don't mean this," said Simson, much offended. "You're comfortable enough, aren't you, Linnell? If there's any-

thing you want that's not done, speak about it, and we'll see what we can do."

"Oh! no, no! it's not that. Only my plans have changed. I'm thinking of chucking my work at the Museum and going abroad for a bit or something."

"The plan," said Williams, "sounds attractively vague at present."

"It's practically settled in my own mind," said Bernard, blushing.

"You're not going to-morrow, I take it," said Simson, and Ephraim Smith, opening his mouth with astonishment, gasped.

"Why, whatever will you do?"

"No, I've not done anything about it yet. I'm anxious to . . . to consult your convenience in the matter, but some time next month would suit me."

Bernard took no heed of Smith's astonishment, though he was secretly a little flattered by it.

"Goodness, what will your people say?" said Smith with another gasp. He imagined the consternation of his own father and mother

if he were suddenly to throw up his appointment. The silence which followed his ejaculation made him afraid that he had said something which he should not have said.

"Do you really mean I'd better approach Robinson, then?"

"Yes, I do."

"Well, I shall write to him to-night."

"Yes, I should."

Williams was annoyed at what he considered Bernard's abrupt decision. It would have been more sensible of Bernard to have consulted him in the matter, yes, and more considerate, seeing that it was to him chiefly that Bernard owed his position at the Museum. Williams knew, without having been directly told, that Bernard had written a book; and probably that well-intentioned ass Leith knew it too, and had been stuffing him with the idea that he was a genius; not good stuffing either, thought Williams, for this particular goose; and he became amused at the seriousness with which he had for a moment taken this impulsive example of humanity's foolishness.

So he went into Bernard's room with the resolution to prevent, if possible, the young idiot from muddling his life too hopelessly.

"May I congratulate you, then?" he said.

"If you like," laughed Bernard, "but what about? Oh! I see what you're driving at. Yes, rather. I had a wonderful time, and I'm still a free man."

"And likely to be freer still, it seems."

"That's exactly it."

"I know," said Williams, and sighed. "I presume you're going to write, going to burn your boats, and deliver your message to the world."

"By gad, you're a magician, Cecilia."

"After careful deliberation . . ."

"You're wrong there," cried Bernard; "it was an inspiration."

"As you have no one but a deaf uncle, who is, quite properly, more concerned about his gout than about his nephew, I feel a kind of absurd responsibility in you, Bernard."

There was a funny mingling of seriousness

and mockery in his voice. Bernard hesitated a moment, and then, ignoring the mockery, said :

" Cecil, look here, I meant to talk it over with you. You've always been awfully good to me. But it slipped out when Simson was being a beast to Ephraim. Don't think I'm ungrateful, I'm not. I know I'm an irresponsible beggar, but it's the thing to do."

" That's all right, my dear chap. Got any plans ? "

" Nothing definite. Only I'm going to write. I'm sick of messing along between two things. It's an utter waste of time. It's no good. You may laugh, but I've got something to say, and I'm going to say it."

" If I were you, I should speak from the ramparts of the Museum."

" Well, I can't," laughed Bernard.

" Make anything on your first pronouncement ? "

" No one ever does."

" ' Captive Good ' ; no money in the title."

" However did you know ? " cried Bernard.

Williams shrugged his shoulders.

"Now tell me," he said, "what ideas has Leith been putting into your impressionable head?"

"Good ones. Did you like the book?"

"Very young and quite nicely written in parts; too notioned and sincere to warrant much speculation on its author's future. But to the point. I should like to put before you my view of the position."

"Oh, do!"

"Burning with ardour . . ."

"As concisely as possible, there's a good chap."

"Fanned by meeting a kindred spirit and his youthful ward and his antique mistress . . ."

"I can't stand this, you know."

"Facts, my dear Bernard," said Williams, lifting his hand. Then suddenly he took firm hold of the arms of the chair and leaned forward a little.

"At this moment you may honestly feel that you have something to say. But there are two things to consider. Does the world

want to listen ? Have you enough to last you thirty years ? You of all men cannot be idle on a hundred and eighty pounds a year. Look at it dispassionately. Would not a man who had this great message have begun his delivery of it sooner ? And granted he had it, would he not have persistence and stability ? You are not surely taken in by the ignorant drivel about weakness and temperament and the rest of it."

" Oh, no, that kind of thing's hogwash, of course," said Bernard uneasily, and then added, " I like to hear you preach."

But the next moment he was sorry that he had said it, because he knew that Williams was in kindly earnest, and it flashed through his mind that a sneer was apt to be a confession of weakness.

" In a year's time," Williams went on imperviously, " you will probably sicken at the thought of writing another word, and what will you do then ? You will be too old to get into anything else. Whereas now you have a capital position, and as much time to write

as any sane man could desire. For you to leave the Museum would be staring madness."

"Year after year after year . . ."

"You ought to know by this time that the essence of life is monotony."

"Not of my life any more."

"If I had thought that you would take Leith as badly as this, you should never have met him."

"Meeting him has made me curiously sure of myself, that's all."

And very strongly Bernard felt that to be true. He was astonished at his audacity in being able thus quietly to tell Williams that he intended to write, without being obliged to try and deliver all the underlying reasons, which would have seemed to Williams ridiculous. This opposition tested the quality of his resolve.

"The average author leads a dog's life. He has a few exciting years, perhaps. Then he reaches the limit of his ability, and goes on turning out the same stuff which he knows to

be third-rate as surely as every one else whose opinion is worth having."

"That's certainly not an encouraging prospect."

"And then the days when you cannot write a syllable, and you have nothing to distract your mind from your own imbecility."

"I don't know why it is, but whenever I talk about a thing I care for with a man like you, it shrinks and dwindles into something dreary and small. When I talk with Leith about the same thing, it expands into . . . into greater magnificence. How queer!"

He smiled to catch himself using the same phrase as Miss Moore, with something, too, of the same intonation. He had good reason to remember it, since it was pretty well the only remark she had deigned to make on that walk through the mist.

"Oh, you idealists," said Williams. "You work each other up into a state of emotional enthusiasm with fatal ease."

"As a matter of fact, I've not mentioned this to Conrad Leith—yet. I'm going to."

"Conrad Leith," said Williams, and sighed.

"At any rate, he doesn't inspire you," laughed Bernard.

"No, he does not. But if you are determined to act on this foolish impulse, I know a man who sub-edits a weekly—an able chap in his way. I can make him read essays, or 'middles,' as you will soon call them. I believe the essential is that they should be the length of one of his dull columns."

"You are a frightfully good chap, Cecilia, in your own strange way."

"Thank you, my dear Bernard, thank you. Let me know how your plans progress."

The reason Bernard gave to the authorities for resigning his post was that he desired to travel, and that his heart was not in his work. His resignation was accepted with slight demur. The excitement of change, which everything in him proclaimed to be an advance, bore him gallantly through the transition days. He was a little frightened at the bigness of his

resolve, and questioned his own ability to fulfil it. But it seemed, now that he had definitely moved forward, that he had for a long time been wanting to do so unconsciously—as if the real struggle had been fought out some time before, and had only shown its effects in weariness and discontent.

Almost at once he found rooms which were much more comfortable than he had hoped. They were in a small street off the Strand, near to the public gardens which ran by the Embankment, but not overlooking them. He was to begin his tenancy at the end of the first week in December, the day after he left the Museum.

Bernard decided to tell Conrad Leith nothing until everything was done. He shrank from leaning upon any one. He wanted to do it all himself. He merely remarked to Leith one evening, "Great things are happening, Conrad."

Leith rubbed his hands together and said, "That's good."

"Oh, and I want to see you on Wednesday

evening next—rather particularly. Can I, by any chance ? "

Conrad Leith thought for a moment, and then said, " Yes, my dear boy, by all means."

And on Wednesday evening Bernard came, very tired with the moving, and very excited.

" I've moved to-day," he said, as casually as he could.

" Upwards, I hope," said Leith.

" I've moved . . . I mean I've left the bachelor establishment."

" Oh, ho ! " said Conrad Leith, " that's what you've been up to, is it ? I thought you had some fish frying. Kindly tell me about it."

" And I've left the blasted old Museum. . . . I've just got enough to live on . . . and I'm going to work . . . only my work, I mean . . . no more slavery, freedom."

As Leith did not speak, he added : " You don't think I'm a hopeless ass, do you ? "

" No, no, no, no," said Leith hurriedly. " But it's a big thing to do."

He was silent again. Bernard began to grow uneasy.

"I like action, bold action. If a man has anything to say, let him come out into the open and say it. Half measures always fail."

"You think I ought to have done it before. After all, it's not much, really; it isn't as if I should ever starve."

"No, I don't think that. We have to wait our time, you know. No two men develop on the same lines. What made you decide? Why didn't you tell us? The Princess would have liked to help with . . . I'll write to her. . . . She'll look you up to-morrow . . . she'll have time, if I know her."

"Thanks, most awfully," stammered Bernard. "But, I say, don't you bother her. You see, it's the top of the house, third story, and the stairs aren't carpeted."

But Leith was writing quickly; he read out what he was writing: "He says fourth story" ("Third," corrected Bernard), "uncarpeted stairs, don't bother, but he seems to like the prospect almost half as much as I should myself under the circumstances. I can say no more."

And he did not. He stuck up the envelope and addressed it.

"I know how dreary rooms are before you're settled in them, and a woman can—well, give 'em an air of comfort. Besides, she'd like to help you, I know. She likes you."

He looked at Bernard over his glasses.

"Yes, but really . . . it's most splendidly kind—but when *she* came I should like to . . . to have things nice, and she's frightfully busy, I know. . . ."

"I'd like you to see the practical side of her character. Of course, though—how stupid of me, you've a friend that I've not . . ."

"No I haven't. I'd like Mrs. Fearon to come most awfully."

"That's settled then," said Leith, sticking a stamp on the envelope.

"People are splendid," cried Bernard. "Even Williams . . ."

Conrad Leith laughed.

"Not that Williams isn't a fearfully good chap, but somehow . . . well, you see, he thought me an ass for going; and I wasn't

agreeable to him at all, yet he's going to help me."

"Capital, capital!" said Leith. "I don't know that good is quite the *mot juste* for Cecil Williams, is it?"

"You know what I mean."

"Um, I do!" he said quickly. Then he flung his arms above his head and cried out:

"How I wish I were a young man again to have the chance of making my life, of doing something mad and exciting and perilous like this. To stake all my future on a throw! To feel inside all the magnificent risk and all the difficulties—and then all the confidence and power to carry it through to the end. You do?"

He stooped to pick up his glasses, which had fallen on to the carpet.

"Yes, I do," said Bernard eagerly.

"All the best and highest things in you are pitted now against the little annoyances of life—the thousand little pin-pricks of discomfort and noise; and the enemy's strategy is to pull you down to his level and to make you think

everything is trivial and small and unimportant, like himself. But keep in touch with all the big things, Bernard, my boy; they're always within your reach, within yourself, and you'll win."

And Bernard felt as he went away much as a knight of old must have felt when he rode out into the Greenwood to do battle with monsters, to help the distressed and champion the weak.

When he reached the house it was late, and there was no light in the hall. He could not find the electric-light switch; he fumbled in his pockets for matches, but he had none. He groped about in the darkness, unable to discover the staircase, which was past two doors and a short passage. With hands stretched out he felt along the cold wall and a door. The pressure of his touch pushed it open with a creak and showed him fresh darkness. When he was a little boy he used to lie awake in the dark, too frightened to move or even to cry. Often after he was grown up fear would seize hold of him quite suddenly, and he would force

himself to go downstairs in the dark in order to master it. Now, as he groped and stumbled in the strange darkness, the horror of this fear crept upon him. The horror lay in its intangibility. Anything as human as a drunken man or a burglar would have been a relief. But this something that moved as a part of the stillness and the darkness and made him tremble, what was it? It roused that in him which is Fear, and against Fear he struggled.

Absurd! What was there to be frightened at, for him, a man and a strong man? Imagining his childish terrors had changed him for a moment into a child again.

He stepped forward resolutely, and came to the wall at the end of the passage. The stairs were a little to the left, he knew now, and began to feel with his hands along the wall slowly. He touched something that made him withdraw his hands, and something cold fell down his sleeve. He jerked his arm. Just by his elbow the thing clung. Instinctively he beat his left hand against it, once. The little crunch made him realise that it was a soft blackbeetle.

He shook the body down his sleeve, and it was a great effort for him to overcome physical sickness, and while he stood there the Fear moved forward and wound him in its coils. He could not move. He could hardly breathe. His throat became dry. His forehead sweated. The muscles stiffened in his arms, in his stomach, in his legs. . . .

Then a drop trickled slowly down from his forehead, and it tickled the side of his nose. He laughed, and the Fear disappeared more strangely even than it had come. He walked straight forward, and found without surprise the foot of the staircase.

In his room a bright fire was burning. He went into his bedroom and washed his elbow. Without lighting the lamp he sat down at full length in his chair with his back to the pile of books, which were not yet arranged.

He was not amused by his terror, nor did he try to deceive himself as to its existence. He saw that Fear in all its manifold guises was very real, and a dangerous enemy to the man who desired to live and to keep himself un-

dulled to the joy of life. Against Fear, with its satellites, custom and indifference, he set the strength of his vitality. He was on the edge of the battle in which all brave men had joined and would for ever join. And the arbiter of a man's bravery was not success, not the world, not even his friends, but his own relentless soul, with its hard gleam of the divine, that must ever be kept undimmed.

How rightly was she called the Princess who had lived so long and so victoriously that her presence was as fragrant of strength as a red rose is of sweetness! And Conrad Leith and his ward . . . who was she, that girl with the large eyes and the beautiful voice? Of whom did she remind him, and what was it that made her so like a child as she was? She was not small, she was not stupid, she certainly was not superior. Everything about her seemed spontaneous; she had nothing to say, so she did not speak, and did not apparently feel uneasy at her own silence. Therein perhaps lay the secret. And then the sudden change of her face from entire joy to entire gravity. Perhaps

that was it. Jacynth Moore . . . Moore was commonplace, but Jacynth was pleasantly reminiscent of one of his favourite poems. "Jacynth, you're sure her name is . . ." No one could be so attractively intimate and with such a firm touch as Browning.

He found a volume—the sixth—and glanced through the pages. He wondered at the man's inexhaustible vitality; and reading lines here and there which he had marked with a pencil, he sleepily approved his former taste until he went to bed.

He found, as he turned out his pockets, that his engagement book happened (strangely enough) to be in its right place. Looking through the pages, he noticed the St. Andrew's Cross which he had drawn against the Tuesday. Certainly that day had proved memorable. Again he heard the dirty little girl's voice saying, "Please take me 'cross the street." He shuddered again at Williams's recital of poor Ephraim Smith's misfortune, and heard almost the exact words which he used to invite him to dinner—to describe Conrad Leith. It

seemed as though it must be more than a month ago, and it was—a week more. But into that time such an amount was crowded. All the events were quite ordinary, and yet the course of his life seemed to have changed—not changed—strictly, he had during this month for the first time seen a course with any clearness. And how had it happened? He thought about that until he went to sleep.

He had hardly finished his breakfast before a telegram came: "Delighted to come, if I may, about twelve. Fearon." By twelve all his books were fitted into their shelves, and, surveying his room, he failed to see any finishing touch that even a woman—and that woman a Princess—could suggest.

He had never seen her in out-of-door clothes. When he called upon her in London (she lived in South Kensington) she was wearing exactly the same kind of dress as she wore in the country. That great problem she simplified by wearing always black, with one style for the morning and one for the evening. He could not imagine her dressed in any other way. He

speculated upon the probable nature of her hat. A felt hat with a large black feather would be ideal, but the wind and rain . . . and she might think it a little rakish for her years. His heart desired a large feather, and his desire was gratified. He did not know of what the hat's fabric consisted.

"It's wonderful of you to come," he said, shy with delight, "and to be wearing a great black feather. I knew you would."

"Your room is charming," she said, looking swiftly round as she loosened her cape, which was made of soft cloth, simple and fur-lined, with a large fur collar. Bernard hung it over the back of a chair, and was convinced that it smelt of lavender.

"Your view is limited," she said, "so I should have window curtains. That blank brick wall is not inspiriting. But you can see the sky through the top panes. You must have worked hard to get it trim so quickly."

"The housekeeper's been splendid, and I bucked at it a bit because you were coming."

The old lady's eye twinkled.

"I brought you some flowers. They are on the table."

"Fancy *your* bringing *me* flowers!"

"Have you a vase?"

"Gorgeous chrysanthemums," he said, undoing the paper.

He stooped to kiss her hand, and she patted his head. Her glove smelt sweetly of lavender, dried lavender.

"I should put them in that brass pot on the mantelpiece. And here are some cigarettes. They are the kind Conrad smokes."

Bernard stammered and blushed; he could not find words. The eyes of the old lady beamed with pleasure at his confusion.

"I think," she said, "that Miss Lablache must come and spend a half-day with you."

"Do tell me who Miss Lablache is," said Bernard, laughing.

"She is a superior person, an invaluable woman who can, among other things, mend your armchair, put up the window curtains, and wash the glass of your pictures without breaking them. She is coming to work for me to-

morrow; she shall be spared you during the morning."

"You are good. I do like your coming fearfully; it's a splendid inauguration of my room. How I wish there were a piano. I simply can't understand why you and Conrad are so wonderful to me. It seems absolutely incredible that I could only have known you for a month. . . . I hardly know myself how much you've done for me. Why is it? Why has it all happened?"

"Bernard, my dear"—she looked at him very seriously and very kindly as she spoke—"you must always remember that we are old."

He expostulated, but she persisted. "Yes, I mean old. I have lived sixty-five years, some of them very long years. I must be interested in life in a wholly different way from that in which you should be. You must understand what I mean. My days of action are past. I watch and contemplate. See this clearly, and you will not be disappointed in me."

"Oh, I don't agree with you an atom," cried

Bernard. "Don't you call coming to the Strand from South Kensington, thinking of flowers and cigarettes and Miss Lablache action? What's action if all this isn't? There's nothing I can do for you, only adore you. . . ."

He stopped abruptly.

"Youth," she said softly to herself, "youth is always right in its impulses. Would that youth had the knowledge to act rightly upon them! I see much that is wary, much that is silly; but wisdom and sound folly I seem very seldom to see. I hear truth in that as well as the voice of the crone. *Laudator temporis acti.* But you must remember what great idols I had for my youth. Morris and Swinburne and Rossetti, Meredith and Browning. I have lived through great days."

"Still greater are coming."

"Mankind assimilates thought. Their ideas are being slowly put into more and more general practice. What they were obliged to say darkly can now be spoken quite simply and plainly."

She rose up.

"Give me my cloak," she said. "I will treat you" (her eyes smiled) "to luncheon. We will celebrate the inauguration with a bottle of what I believe you call the best."

II

THE excitement of the inaugural ceremony and the change in his way of life took Bernard buoyantly through the first week. That was his record week for the amount of work done, and it remained his record week for some time to come. Then the force of the initial impetus abated, and for the first time he knew exactly how long a day could be.

He kept persistently driving himself to work, and nothing at all was done; he was too tired to sleep. Feeling that everything was in his favour more than he had thought possible for any one, he slowly sank deeper and deeper into depression, until at last his will power seemed to leave him entirely. He sat in his arm-chair, torpid with apathy, and watched the hands move imperceptibly round the clock. He could not read. He could not think. He was

ashamed to go and see any one. On the fourth day he sent a reply-paid telegram to Ephraim Smith; to some one he must speak: but Ephraim Smith was engaged, or said that he was.

Bernard felt that physical pain would be a relief, an excuse, at any rate. He lunched that day standing at a bar, and slunk back to his room. Every moment that he did not work seemed to sink him further from the ability ever to work again. He hardly dared to read what he had written before; he knew that it would appear pitiful stuff. But something compelled him to read it, and the badness, the dead futility of it all, hurt him like a careful torture.

The Museum, with fixed hours and work just sufficient to hold his attention, resembled in his fancy a quiet Paradise, from which he had been driven by a restless demon that lived within his mind. He thought of Williams and his glib prophecy with dull resentment. Williams was right this time, sneer and all. What right had he, Bernard Linnell, to sup-

pose that he was at all out of the common run of men? Every man needed some plodding, honest work. Conrad Leith should have known this and warned him. With fatal ease, indeed, he was worked up into a state of emotional enthusiasm. "Oh, you idealists!" murmured within him the irritating voice of Williams.

And Mrs. Fearon—a charming old lady, of course; and there were a large number of them in the world, who rustled about in silk skirts, being kind to people. Kind! What did he want with kindness? Surely he must soon outgrow this crazy habit of sudden attachments! And the girl, who stroked Conrad Leith's head for no reason while he was reading. . . . His own head was hot and aching. It was easy enough for Conrad Leith to be cheerful with rooms in the Temple and a house in the country, and a motor-car. That silent, firm caress would smooth the pain from his head. Weakling, to wish even for an instant to be dependent upon any one else!

"I'm lonely!" he cried out, with his head in his hands.

He began automatically to count the tickings of the clock to keep his mind from thinking, to keep his mind a blank.

Then he heard steps on the staircase, mounting slowly. Could it be that some one was coming to see him? Any human voice would sound as music to him: any human face would seem beautiful to his eyes. The man who lived opposite had friends to visit him. He had heard their footsteps many times, and many times he had been disappointed.

The door—his door—was rapped.

He opened it.

"Conrad!" he cried.

"Am I disturbing you?"

"No," said Bernard, "no, you're not disturbing me."

"Fortunate to find you in. Well, how's the work going?"

"For four days I've . . . I've . . . not written one single word."

His despair became grotesque as he made

the remark. It had, however, been transferred to his memory—and deeply scored in it.

But while Conrad stood with his overcoat on, holding his hat in his hand, a sudden terror caught Bernard that he was going to be left alone again.

"Don't go," he said. "Don't go, Conrad! Sit down."

"Certainly," said Leith, looking at him. "I'll just take off my coat."

Bernard laughed loudly.

"I *am* glad you've come."

"My dear boy," said Leith, "when you can't work, you must go for a walk or go and see people. You'll never be a machine for turning out words."

"I've had loathsome disloyal thoughts," said Bernard, with great difficulty.

"Nonsense. You've fretted yourself into an absurd state; and, of course, you turned most bitterly against all that you care for most deeply. Your work, I expect, seemed hideous drudgery compared with the peaceful gloom of the Museum."

"Yes, it did."

"You've got to look after yourself, as a musician looks after his instrument. You'll soon learn. It's quite simple to see what's the matter. How much did you do last week?"

"Last week was all right. I worked all the time; I felt so keen."

"Well, now comes the reaction. You can't make a sudden demand on yourself like that and not expect to take the consequences. Let's hear what you did."

"Do you mean read it to you?"

"Yes."

"Can you stand it?"

"I'll try."

So Bernard read; and when he had finished, Leith's nod of approval pleased him very much.

"I'm glad you're out of the conservatory. But I've a plan. . . . Doing anything this evening?"

"No, I'm not."

"Well, dine with me, and we'll go and see

the Princess afterwards. There's a full moon to-night, and we'll drive to Pimlico and walk home along the Embankment—a slight detour, but no matter." The boy must sleep, he thought.

"What a god-like plan!"

"Six o'clock. Go and dress; I'll wait here. Jeremy'll be at the club at seven-fifteen. We'll go back to my rooms and I'll dress, and we shall have time, if you're quick."

"Oh, easy," said Bernard. With his arms half out of his coat, a disquieting thought came to him; he turned round.

"I say, Conrad," he faltered, "you're not just being . . . being kind. . . . I mean . . . I should hate . . . to intrude or . . ."

"No," shouted Leith, "go and dress. We shall be late if you stand there havering on about your qualms and your sensibilities."

Leith pushed him from the room. But Bernard came back almost immediately, and, taking no heed of Leith's angry protest, opened with as much mystery as he could command the drawer of his writing-table and drew out

a box of cigarettes, which he handed to Conrad.

"Where did you get these?" asked Leith.

"A present," said Bernard, "only used on the most special occasions."

"Last time I was here you palmed off . . ."

"Au riche fumeur. I've only smoked seven of these in twelve days."

In spite of these delays they were at the club before the appointed hour, and waited ten minutes after it for the arrival of Cleese. Bernard sat in a chair blinking sleepily at a large fire; but Conrad Leith puffed at a cigarette, and throwing it away, half smoked, walked to the door and looked through the glass into the hall. He came back to see Bernard almost dozing, and laughed.

"If your day had been well ordered you'd be in as big a fidget as I am. I can do without dinner and get through an evening quite happily on repeated glasses of milk and on biscuits, but when I am caparisoned for dinner, when I've ordered dinner . . ."

"Waiting's beastly," said Bernard, comfortably.

At that moment Cleese came in. As he hurried forward he knocked a paper from the table on to the floor.

"Ah, good," he cried. "I was afraid you mightn't be here yet."

"What! not here yet? Do you know that you are ten minutes late?"

Cleese pulled out an enormous watch, which he held out triumphantly for Leith's inspection. The hands pointed to 7.15 precisely. The august clock on the mantelpiece and the watches of the other two gave the huge hunter the lie, but its owner called all the gods to witness that it had never lost or gained a minute during the fifteen years in which it had been in his possession, except on the rare occasions when he forgot to wind it. Expostulation was vain.

"You live with Cecil Williams?" said Cleese during dinner to Bernard. The thought even of Williams made him bristle.

"I used to. I'm living alone now, though."

"Couldn't do with him?" queried Cleese on a chuckle.

"Not exactly that. He's a really good chap, you know, kind and all that."

"He's correct, perfect, immaculate, curse him! That's what makes him the abomination he is. He's strong too, and all his strength is expended in belittling life."

"I know," said Bernard; "but I think you're a little hard on him."

"And life can take care of itself," said Leith.

Cleese held up both his hands. He retorted first upon Bernard, thrusting forward his shaggy, red face.

"Hard! I've a healthy hatred of him." Then he turned on Leith, and said, with terrible composure: "Since when did you hold that coward's view?"

"Always."

"Do you mean to tell me that all our efforts and struggles to bring beauty into life are vain? all the attacks on what is ugly and cloaking and false and material, useless? all our visions phantasmal nothings?"

"No, but . . ."

"Ah!" said Cleese, as though a weight had been removed from him. "What do you mean then?"

"A man's influence on others must always be a secondary, an almost casual thing. He must keep his own soul poised and . . ."

"Stop!" cried Cleese. "I will not be led by my bulbous nose into the infinite during dinner. Conrad Leith, you're a vile host, and a viler logician. You try to tickle your palate and your soul at the same time. I won't be a party to such damnation. No truth was ever seen in a club dining-room, or ever will be. Every club ought to be burned, and every theatre——"

"What! just when the theatre's beginning to be a means of national expression," said Bernard.

"I'm sorry for a nation that is expressed by the fourth-rate gibberish that's chattered on the English stage."

"It's beginning to touch the whole community. A community's like a man—education

wakens it. The mere body, of course, wakes first—much the largest part in bulk, at any rate—so you have musical comedies and all the stuff to please the animal. But the brains are alive too. There's better stuff being written now than there's ever been—since the days of Elizabeth."

"And nobody wants to see it."

"Yes, but the pioneers look with horror on feeling; they dig all kindliness and love from life and give you sheer intellect, which is unpopular and untrue. You can't work the stage machine merely by brains to have any effect."

"You can't work it with anything else, young sir."

"There's something in what the boy says," Leith interposed.

"Precious little," growled Cleese.

His own idea burned on in Bernard's mind, while the other two discussed the theatre, which would, under their control, be run on ideal lines. As far as Bernard could see, the management would only be quite ideal if full power were vested in one man, and that man

was invariably the one who happened to be speaking.

A taximeter cab took them swiftly to Mrs. Fearon's house in South Kensington. Bernard noticed with pleasure that the sky was clear and that the moon was not likely to be obscured by any cloud.

"Mrs. Fearon," said Cleese, breaking the silence as they drove along, "is the only woman —man or woman, for that matter—whom I can endure to hear play the piano. Those infernal key-thumpers—I'm always disappointed they don't stoop their smug faces and play with their stuck-up noses. And how's the silent singer who makes me feel a fool?"

"You alarm her."

"I—damn it!—why, I wouldn't hurt a blind fly, and any woman could do what she liked with me. I make a point of allowing 'em to."

A note of humorous sorrow sounded in his voice.

Bernard seemed to remember (somewhere in his remote past, but very vividly) three days of

torment which he had experienced because he could not work. The distance between misery and joy is, in one way of measurement, so vast as to be immeasurable. The prospect of the evening filled him with keen joy, so that the misery, which reached its depth on that identical afternoon, already appeared to him to be dim and unreal.

The softening which Bernard heard in Cleese's voice when he spoke of Mrs. Fearon was noticeable in his whole demeanour in her actual presence. It hardly seemed possible that this was the same man whom he had seen fulminating and bristling at dinner. Reverence, thought Bernard with some justification.

The room smelt of coffee, which was bubbling in a copper pot in the inner room farthest from the door. Two rooms had been made into one: there was one door, but two fireplaces, and in both fireplaces a bright fire was burning. The light of them glinted on the gold frieze, which gave depth to the plainness of the wall-paper. Its brightness struck a quiet

note of triumph, which Bernard thought very suitable while he was talking to the Princess.

A little cloud of annoyance—disappointment almost—gathered and grew when there was no sign of Miss Moore, and no reference was made to her. He had taken her presence for granted, and resented her absence. He had nothing that he wanted to say to her. He had not consciously even looked forward to seeing her; but she was quite as much a part of the room and of the atmosphere as the piano itself. He smiled at his ridiculous sense of injury—the more blithely because at that moment Miss Moore came into the room.

For a moment he thought that her eye brightened when she saw him. But he must have been mistaken, he was certain, when he saw her whole face smile as she shook hands with Jeremy Cleese. She was apparently on the best of terms with him. There was no evidence of the alarm, about which Conrad had spoken. Cleese called her the Prima Donna. Bernard thought it an obvious name, and wished that he had written plays.

"Where is Thomas?" he asked.

But Cleese spoke at the same time, and Miss Moore did not hear Bernard's remark. That made him feel foolish and shy. He remembered that Cleese had known them for more years than he had known them himself for weeks; and at once the imp of mockery jigged within him, and, using the voice of Williams, jeered at belief in friendship, immediate and eternal. Cleese continued to talk to Miss Moore; Conrad had taken Mrs. Fearon into the other room to discuss some arrangement. Bernard saw a book lying on the table, and read half a sentence before he realised that it was his own work of virtue. The sentence seemed poor.

"Mrs. Fearon has been looking at your book," said Miss Moore.

By thinking that his position on the hearthrug with his own book in his hand was eminently idiotic, he made it so.

"Oh," he stammered lamely, becoming very red, and praying that Cleese might let the matter drop.

"*You* write?" exclaimed Cleese. "I imagined you sat in some snug office."

"I—I was."

"He writes under the name of Grey," said Miss Moore, in her clear voice. "Basil Grey."

But Cleese had forgotten his stupendous stricture on the use of pseudonyms.

"'Captive Good,'" she went on, with serene unconsciousness of Bernard's disquietude.

She was positively voluble this evening.

"What!" cried Cleese. "I've read that. There's some good stuff in it. But you've got the marriage bee in your bonnet, my fine fellow."

"Have I?" said Bernard, and blinked.

"Have I!" began Cleese. But Mrs. Fearon came back at that moment with Conrad Leith, and her presence took the wind out of the impending storm.

Miss Moore went out of the room.

"Are you talking about Bernard's book?" said Mrs. Fearon. "I like it very much."

"What's the good of writing against mar-

riage, if you've nothing to put in its place ? " said Cleese.

" I think," said Bernard, " that marriage is horrible."

" Of course, that only shows *you* are afraid of it, and believe in its sanction and sanctity, and all the rest of it."

" Yes, I suppose it's bred into me."

" That's a true remark."

" But if two people love each other, it's their own concern, not the church's, not the State's, not . . ."

Bernard stopped. Mrs. Fearon looked at Bernard, as if she hoped that he would say more. But his ideas were in far too great confusion to find clear expression to any one ; to four people he was quite inarticulate. On the other hand, Cleese warmed to his subject before an audience, and expounded his theories at some length. He surprised Bernard by the moderate way in which he expressed his views, and ended what Leith declared to be a speech excerpted from one of his plays, by saying that it was absurd to

confuse love and marriage; one he declared to be romance, the other a delicate matter of business. Bernard, remembering his onslaught upon Williams, was quite muddled; he did not understand how the two points of view could be reconciled; and yet he felt that Cleese was sincere, almost desperately sincere, in what he said.

"I think," said Mrs. Fearon, "that it is a mistake to attack conditions."

"But how else can they be remedied?" said Conrad Leith, and Bernard was sure that he made the remark simply because he liked to hear the Princess speak, not because he disagreed with her opinion.

The conjecture was partly right; but Leith also wanted Bernard to hear what Mrs. Fearon had to say. She knew this perfectly well, and was pleased.

"I mean that each man must rise above circumstances and things material, by what is in himself. That is the essential. Suppose that to-morrow, by Act of Parliament, all the conditions of every life were made

beautiful and clean, I am afraid that the day after they would be ugly and unclean. The people themselves must be changed."

"And that, dear lady, can only be done by showing them the horror of their present conditions."

"I think it can be better done by showing them better conditions, as you just now suggested, and by teaching them wherein joy lies and the power of joy."

"Take a bit of doing," said Cleese, "for those who work twelve hours a day to keep themselves alive."

"Yes, and almost more 'doing' as you say, for those who idle fourteen hours a day."

Bernard did not understand what either meant sufficiently to distract his attention from the desire of music. Miss Moore came back, and went into the other part of the room, looking for something, apparently. He joined her.

"Where is Thomas?" he inquired.

"Asleep in his basket in my room," she answered.

"Isn't he allowed in here?"

"Very seldom."

"Have you noticed the infamous way dogs have of sheltering behind a stranger when you tell them to do anything?"

"Yes, I have, and don't you hate the person who gives them foolish sympathy?"

"Rather," said Bernard. He hoped that Miss Moore, who spoke with sudden eagerness (again like a child, he thought), would continue. But she did not. So before the silence could gather force he asked her if there was to be any music that evening.

"Interrupt them," he suggested, "or Cleese'll go on talking all night, and I fearfully want to hear you sing about the little white house."

"Do you?" she said, looking at him.

"Yes, I do," he answered with some emphasis, and he knew that if his request had been merely complimentary he would have been obliged to say so. She went and stood in the other room, Bernard following. Cleese finished his sentence, a weighty one, and ran

his fingers through his hair. Conrad Leith got up and said :

" Yes, you're about right, Jeremy."

Then he rubbed his hands together, and, smiling at Jacynth, said :

" I hope you took no coffee, Miss Pet. I want to hear your voice in its absolute perfection to-night."

" I shan't be able to sing at all if you talk like that," she answered.

She sang two songs, and then Cleese clamoured for a Brahms song, of which he had forgotten the name, but of which he made valiant efforts to hum the tune. But she said that it was impossible to sing that, while she searched through a pile of music. As she opened a book, she said, smoothing down the page :

" I'll sing this, Great-grandmother."

She did not look at Bernard, but he knew quite well that it was the song for which he had asked. It was. And the song gave him keener delight than ever.

He said so.

"Yes, the song grows on you," said Miss Moore.

"Such beauty must," he agreed with ardour.

But his pleasure was not quite so impersonal as he supposed.

After Mrs. Fearon had played Jeremy Cleese pulled out his enormous watch and said he must be going.

"It's quite early," said Mrs. Fearon.

Then he looked at his watch, shook it, and shouted with laughter.

"Look here, Conrad, my boy," he called out, "this sinful piece of mechanism has stopped, stopped, too, by all the powers of evil, at seven-fifteen."

"Impostor," Leith laughed.

Cleese shook the watch violently, and hurriedly explaining to Mrs. Fearon the trick it had played him, he departed, delighted. His chuckles, while he put on his coat in the hall, were audible in the room. Leith came back smiling, and asked the Princess if he might smoke one more cigarette. Bernard sat still and silent, while they talked.

He was aware of the peace, and was drawn more closely to its heart than before, because the past three days had made him more susceptible to its influence. There is a peace which comes from contentment (that sleepy thing!), and a peace which comes from strength and control. Indolence is born of the one, but the other is the fountain-head of energy and achievement. It soothed his spirit as after a restless night the freshness of a summer morning had often soothed his head.

"It's no use going to sleep, my boy," said Conrad. "I don't intend to let you back out of our night walk."

"Oh, I'm dead keen."

"We thought of walking along the Embankment to see the river by night."

"What a nice plan!" said Miss Moore.

"'Waters on a starry night are beautiful and fair,'" quoted the Princess.

Bernard shook hands with Miss Moore.

"I do wish you were coming," he said.

"You'll see more than in our walk through the mist."

"I wonder."

They went away. As they drove in the cab Bernard was as excited as he used to be when his father took him, a very little boy, to see Buffalo Bill at Olympia.

"I say, Conrad," he said suddenly, "I walked along here, farther up, of course, with Cecil Williams that evening he brought me to see you. It seems simply years ago."

"I expect it does," said Leith.

As they got out of the cab an old woman, sodden with drink, her white hair dishevelled under a filthy bonnet, trimmed with a dirty red rose, passed them. She stank of drink and dirt, and as she walked heavily along she muttered to herself. She almost touched Bernard; her nearness sickened him.

"From the Princess to that poor loathsome creature!" he said with a shudder.

"My God," cried Leith, "what a world! And look at the moon shining on the river, and changing the Thames as it flows silently on its old way to the sea, into a stream of quivering silver, on which you can almost see the water

fairies dancing with grave joy. It's all part of some tremendous scheme."

During the walk Bernard noticed, as he had never noticed before, the shattering contrasts on every side, between the ingenious noisy trams and the movement of the river, between the clamour of the streets and the quiet spaciousness of the sky. Men crept and bustled under the magnificence, as though the moon and the water and the stars in the sky were no part of their existence.

A terrific setting for a paltry scene, he thought—if it were not for man's mind.

BERNARD could nev
exact effect of diffe
in a trio. His ea
result, but was not su
to catch the process of blendin
follow each sound to its sourc
the same with his three new
harmonised so perfectly tha
tell the nature of the part wh
Even when he saw one of the
conscious of a vague incomple

One morning it occurred t
had not been to the Nationa
long time, and he became anxi
pictures that day. He knew t
engaged; he did not like t

afterwards in Soho. His financial position was sound enough to endure the strain, as he was making a useful pound a week from the paper to which Williams had introduced him.

The plan seemed delightful until the telegram was actually sent. Then he foresaw possible and unpleasant consequences, which previously he had swept on one side, as not worthy a moment's consideration. She might think his mode of invitation bordered upon disrespect, or she might misunderstand the spirit in which he had sent the telegram. His intentions—he had none, except to be friendly. He certainly wanted her to be his friend; and with needless defiance he declared to himself that a boy and a girl could be friends. A feeling of responsibility, however, disquieted him. He was quite able to take care of himself, but was she? Chivalry and arrogance were mingled in his thoughts in nice proportions, as they are often wont to be, and quite inextricably. He was uneasy till the answer came. He did not know how much

the idea of seeing pictures with her, once started, had taken hold of him.

He read with relief that she was pleased to come; and all anxieties were merged in anticipating the pleasure of the party. He was shaved and dressed (his early morning toilet was reduced to a careful minimum) much too soon, and after strolling as far as St. James's Palace and back round Trafalgar Square, enjoying the sight of all the busy people, he only had ten minutes to wait before he saw Miss Moore coming from the direction of the Haymarket. She saw him at once, and gave a half-wave with her hand. He ran down the steps and hurried to meet her. She did not seem to see him again until he came right up to her. She stopped and let go her skirt. "How do you do?" she said, holding out her hand. Then she gathered up her skirt again. This made Bernard feel unaccountably shy. Something about her deliberate action tickled his sense of humour, and at the same time was so characteristic of her and delighted him so much that he kept

himself by a miracle from exclaiming, "Oh, you darling." And that would have been, he thought, a difficult prelude to some hours of conversation.

"You didn't mind my wiring like that?" he said.

"I liked it," she said gravely.

They did not speak again until they reached the turnstile into the gallery; but Bernard's face and bearing showed signs of such extreme happiness that people looked askance at him, as though he were some strange creature. Miss Moore walked precisely as if she were alone; her head was a little bent to observe the pavement; once or twice the corners of her mouth moved almost imperceptibly.

"Turners or Italians?" cried Bernard, stopping in the hall.

"Italians," said Miss Moore, turning round for a moment, in the quiet voice of one accustomed to answer "My life" to the highwayman's challenge, and led the way up the staircase.

"Good," said Bernard, catching her up,

Benozzo Gozzoli, C

"And Dürer's
please," she added.

He looked at her
and said:

"Oh, of course, y

The pictures wer
Bernard only learned
she liked the way the
mother's lap, clasped
she liked to come to
time sped by with s
amazed to see that it

"What lives of
shows," said Bernard
wish I knew more ab
seeing them with yo

an actual part of a memory, which was very close to his heart. For some reason he wanted to tell her, but could not in the street. During the walk he came to value her gift of silence. The train of thought in his mind was not one which he could easily dismiss, and not one through which he would have cared to chatter amiably about small matters. Ever since he had seen the picture, and its associations were summoned to the front of his mind, he had felt nearer to his companion, for some reason which was quite inexplicable to him. Perhaps he knew that she would understand his feelings and reverence them. She must surely be conscious that something was on his mind. His instinct told him that she was sensitive to anything that was real in feeling, and responsive. He could have given no reason for this; and perhaps, if any one had stated it to him quite deliberately as a fact, he would have questioned its truth. But the instinct was alive, however mysteriously. The last thing a man is wont to disentangle in the web of his personality is the instinct's subtle working,

and yet it colours a man's every thought and feeling, and becomes a great force when recognised.

"It's queer that Dürer picture should be one of your favourites," he said during lunch. They were sitting at the far corner of the end room in the little restaurant.

She did not say or infer that it was queer of him to think so. He went on :

"It was the beginning of last year. A friend of mine—I suppose he is my greatest friend, though he is abroad now, and never writes. But if he came into the room now—do you understand ?—we should begin just where we left off. I know he cares as I care, that I matter to him as he matters to me. . . . He's a year older than I am . . . reserved, reserved and proud he is, devilish proud. He wasn't much liked at college. . . ."

Bernard was silent.

"We were to meet at the gallery—he's keen on pictures. I was there before him. He came suddenly upon me. His face was drawn together and set, ashy pale. He said,

'Come this way,' and strode off till he came to empty chairs in front of that picture. We sat down. Then he told what had happened. He mentioned the name of a woman, whom I had heard him only mention once before. 'I loved her,' he said, like that, 'I loved her, and she's dead, thrown out of her motor early this morning, just seen it, seen it in a half-penny paper.' I can hear his voice, low and quick, see the people wandering in front of the pictures, gossiping—you know how aimless they look. 'I might have been nicer to her, Monkey,' he said. He calls me that. You see she was married, and he saw her seldom enough. He was going to see her that evening. He went on talking to me, till his voice broke, crying, you know, and through tears I kept looking at Dürer's father. He seemed to become alive and to understand—to understand. Whenever I look at him now he seems to question me with his little wise eyes, kind eyes, about my friend. When the spirit shines through an old face I think it's beautiful, don't you?"

"Yes."

"It must be thrilling to be nearing the solution of the mighty problem. That's what Shelley said, you know. He was in a boat with his wife and children, and began to sway the boat. His wife said, 'No, dear, we'd better take the children back to lunch.' Trelawney tells the story. Have you read the book?"

"No."

"I must lend it you. I'd like you to read it. Have you read Shelley?"

"A little."

"An absolute realist, you know. He saw as clearly as any one what man was; and much more clearly than any one what man might be. His life, too, was as beautiful as his most beautiful lyric. I could show what I mean, if I had my copy of his poems here. I wish you could come to my rooms. Could you? Why not? This afternoon . . . or no, of course, I forgot. I expect you've an engagement."

Convention, like some waiting beast, raised

its head and showed its uncomely features. It whispered nastily of dangers. The head was ugly, but Bernard knew that if both could face this modern Medusa, it would have no power to harm them. Its petrifying influence, however, began to work upon him, though she said with perfect frankness :

" I should like to come very much."

" But you know," he stammered, " if any one came . . . I mean . . . of course, it's about ten to one against any one coming, but . . ."

He wished that she would help him out of his difficulty.

" People have beastly ideas . . . as far as I'm concerned it's all right . . . but . . ." (he blurted out) " girls aren't supposed to come to a young man's rooms."

" I suppose they are not," she said.

" The world's point of view is all horrible and absurd, but still we do live in the world, and what makes it difficult is that . . ."

" What ? "

" It's so hard to say ; but supposing it were known that you came to my rooms : the world

would look askance at you, unless anything happened, and then you'd be the injured saint . . . to whom no one would speak."

"I lived alone six years abroad," she said.

Bernard waited and listened.

"I can take care of myself," she went on.

"Right," said Bernard. "Then let's forget all about the world and its silly conventions. Only I had to say these things, because I should hate you to . . . to do anything in ignorance. But I think it's rot myself—disgusting rot."

"Conrad thinks these precautions wouldn't exist if they were not necessary."

"He wouldn't mind your coming?"

"No. He thinks that it is a pity they should be necessary."

Bernard laughed and said:

"You emphasised abroad, as though every foreign country were an utter sink of iniquity."

"I meant . . ."

"Oh, I know, I know, but it sounded so funny."

She laughed.

"Let's go," he said. "I'm fearfully keen to show you my room. The Princess came, you know, and Miss Lablache, she put up curtains and . . ."

They both laughed as she rose and said:

"I must put on my veil before a glass. Remember," she added over her shoulder, "we go halves."

When she came back Bernard needed all his mother-wit to overcome her quiet firmness; but he managed to do so at last, and as they left the restaurant he said:

"You look much too like a child to pose as an advanced woman."

"Why do you think I'm like a child?" she asked him.

"I don't know, but I do."

"I don't talk, because I'm too stupid."

"That's horrid of you. You mean you're not stupid enough to cackle as I've been cackling," and he added quickly, "your eyes contain all the wisdom of the world."

"Don't make fun of me!" she said gravely.

"I'm not."

"I am a terrible fraud, then," she said.

"Oh, bunkum," said Bernard.

They walked on in silence.

"Please don't think me clever, because I live with clever people. I'm silent partly because I have nothing to say, and partly because . . . I can't have a nice nature."

"Sullen-tempered you mean," said Bernard cheerfully.

"Yes," she answered. Her voice was so serious that Bernard was immediately annoyed with himself for taking her words flippantly. He glanced at her with surprise and interest.

"I am keen to show you my room," he said, "and my books and things. I believe you'll like them."

And he began to think what could be making her unhappy, and immediately he imagined a host of reasons, so that he felt selfish and unsympathetic to have supposed, as he airily had supposed, that everything in her life was smooth and easy.

"Look," she said, "that's the size I should like to be." She alluded to a woman who was crossing the road—large as an Amazon.

"Thank God you're not; but why? You're tall enough, surely?"

"Yes, but not big enough for a singer, only for a drawing-room singer."

"Isn't that to do with the quality of your voice rather than with your absolute bulk?"

"Partly. There are only about three songs I can ever hope to sing perfectly."

"You set yourself a high standard."

"Don't you?"

"Yes. Have you read my book?"

"No."

"I believe you have, and don't like to say how much you dislike it."

But he knew that she had not read it, and he was piqued again at her lack of interest in him.

"I'm reading Henry James, you see," she went on.

"You should have said William Shakespeare. It'd have been even more crushing."

"But I am reading Henry James," she said, and stopped long enough to give a little stamp with her left foot. He laughed. She was strangely like a child, he thought. They walked on to the Strand and crossed the street, before she spoke again. Then she said:

"I hate cheap scores over any one's work," and there was in her voice an emphasis which he had not before heard. He was greatly pleased. She accepted his sincerity and keenness as a matter of course, and that inspirited him.

"You are a dear," he cried, laughing, and added quickly, to cover his little outburst: "Here we are, look; it's the last house but one on the right-hand side, Miss Moore."

Perhaps the creak of the wooden staircase was expostulatory, but Bernard was troubled again by uneasiness as they climbed the stairs. In his own room, however, Miss Moore, by a quality in her manner, put him entirely at his ease. She not only thought the ordinary usage foolish (on the rare occasions when she thought

about it at all), but it did not affect her. Her nature was more developed than Bernard's in this way, for he fumed continually against its restrictions, and was much affected by them in consequence. The fact was that though he desired to treat women as human beings, as individuals, yet generations of ancestors had instilled into his blood the idea that they should be treated as rare toys, most fitly kept under a glass case.

That kind of doll-creating chivalry a woman can easily scatter if she will, and find, again if she will, a chivalry more deeply founded and not reliant for its existence upon the temporary abeyance of a man's intellect. Women obtain the love which they demand.

The presence of Jacynth filled Bernard with unconscious happiness and life. The atmosphere was rarefied and invigorating; he was a little more himself. He liked his books and his pictures more as he showed them to her. His ideas became more real as he tried to express them to her. He saw fresh beauties in the poems which he read to her, and all life

seemed better worth living as he talked about life to her.

And this happened without either being conscious of any event. He was happy, and she was happy too. That was all either knew, and even that was unrevealed while they were together.

"Now, I'll make you some tea," said Bernard. "I've a loaf and some butter and a cake. It's a jolly good cake—got chocolate on the top. Will you have a large cup or a small one?"

"A large one," she answered.

"It's rather huge, you know." Bernard hesitated, holding up a full-sized breakfast-cup.

"I prefer that size."

Bernard laughed with pleasure to see the way the corners of her mouth moved with an uneven little twitch and her eyes opened wider —a sense of fun was expressed more vividly than if her whole face had crinkled into a laugh. Her neck, too, moved with a little odd jerk. . . .

"Companion," he said. "Isn't it a jolly word? Be mine, will you?"

"Yes," she said; "but . . ."

"Splendid," he interrupted. "Do you take sugar with your tea? I think Prima Donna a stupid name for you."

"Do you?"

"Yes, I do."

"I take sugar; but you've not made the tea yet."

"You should always put the sugar and milk in first. Oh, by gad, where is the milk?"

He poured it from a small can into a jug. Then the kettle began to boil, and he made the tea.

As he handed the cup to her he became aware of her hands for the first time, though he had looked at them quite often at lunch and afterwards. He remembered how he had watched them caress Conrad's head, and how (this he had till then forgotten) he had during his misery envied Conrad that caress. Now, while she was sitting before him, he wanted to feel the caress of her hands: he wanted it so much that he became self-conscious and disturbed. Up till that moment he had been

speaking to her without embarrassment the thoughts which came into his mind. He could no longer do so. The only thing in his mind was the great wish that she should caress him.

"Why not?" he asked himself, and "Do I love her?" and . . . then the voices wrangled. All the old problems of love and life and self came into instant being. Before him they ranged themselves, like scarecrows in a nightmare, and chattered glibly at him from behind dreary familiar masks. He felt tired and lonely.

"The cake is very good," she said.

"Have some more?"

"Please."

It could not be that she knew nothing of what was happening. He went to look out of the window. He came back with a studied air of unconcern. He hoped that she would go. No absurd impulse should make him lose a friend. So soon as she was gone he could easily reason away these absurd feelings. That she should care for him he knew to be impossible. She hardly took an interest in him. She had

not even troubled to read his book. She had occupied herself—quite rightly—on a spare afternoon by coming to see the young man to whom her guardian and "Great-grandmother" were kind. The position was perfectly clear; his fears for her threw a comic light upon it.

And then steps were heard on the staircase. Of course, she ought never to have come to his room. He felt trapped and humiliated.

By the rap he was confident that of all people it was Williams. He looked at Miss Moore. There was not the least shadow of annoyance or discomfort on her face. She said:

"What a pity!" That was all.

He opened the door. On the threshold stood Cecil Williams. A sudden strong desire seized Bernard to precipitate him violently down the stairs and kick him across the gardens into the river. But he said:

"Hullo, Cecilia! come in. You know Miss Moore, I think."

"Yes," said Williams, "I have had the pleasure."

Bernard watched him closely. Williams

showed no trace of surprise, and talked with composure to Miss Moore about her singing. And Miss Moore spoke exactly (when she did speak) as she would have done in the drawing-room at South Kensington. There was no defiance, no flurry, in her manner. Bernard was amazed. In a little while she rose and said :

" I am afraid I must be going. I have so enjoyed having tea in your room."

She would not let Bernard come to the street door with her. As he closed the room door Williams whistled.

" Well, how is literature getting on, my dear Bernard ? " he said. " I see the fine arts flourish."

" Oh, all right. You've got away earlier than usual, haven't you ? "

" No ; but too early I fear. It's half-past five."

" Is it really ? "

" Time has naturally sped swiftly with you."

" Look here, don't be funny, there's a good chap."

"I have only to close my eyes to hear the wedding bells."

"Well, for Heaven's sake, keep them open!"

Bernard laughed uneasily.

"The *Record's* doing me jolly well," he said. "It was splendid of you to give me that introduction."

"In this ungrateful world your gratitude overwhelms me. But to return. I was going to say that I should not marry a girl who would come alone to a man's rooms—certainly not my own—if I were you, not even if she were very wealthy; and I am afraid that your little girl has only a pittance."

Bernard walked up and down the room, speechless with anger.

"In the first place, there is really no need to marry her; in the second place, it's so much safer not to."

"Will you never see that there are two points of view to this matter? Or will you always go on harping on that old rotten string—that all a man wants from a woman is what any man can get from any woman? You're

not stupid in other things. In this you seem blindly stupid."

"With all the wisdom of the ages to back me in my particular form of stupidity."

"Damn all the wisdom of the ages!" cried Bernard.

"Amen," added Williams devoutly.

"Besides, Plato and St. Francis and Shelley disagreed with the majority . . ."

"An amiable trinity," smiled Williams.

"To say nothing of Morris and Meredith."

"I am afraid that I do not understand what light these five excellent gentlemen throw upon what we are discussing."

"Why, that a woman is not just—just a plaything: that it's possible to have something better than a harem, discreetly made to fit into modern ideas of respectability."

"You must not, in my presence, abuse such an admirable institution, such a perfect solution to modern problems, as the harem."

Bernard saw that he might as well try and explain the beauty of the sun's light to a fish as to try and explain to Williams what he

thought about love. He laughed sadly, and said :

" Well, you'll live your life and I shall live mine. There'll be nothing ever to prove which is right. Only all life must be spiritual."

All this eternal talk, he thought. Words, words, words ! But then he realised that the effort to answer Williams, to express himself, strengthened his convictions and made them more living to him.

" I like talking to you," he said. " It confirms me so splendidly in my own beliefs."

" Like a dog with his four feet stiffened against the lead."

" Not exactly," said Bernard, laughing.

He remembered that when he was a small boy he built a fairy palace in the next door garden, which was cut off by such a high wall from his father's garden that he could only see the tops of the highest bushes. But one afternoon he had, with great care and good fortune, fetched an old barrow from the potting-shed, from which he managed to reach the first bough of a large bush, to the detriment of his

brown holland pinafore. He was clambering up the branches, and was just about to obtain a glimpse of the enchanted land, when the large hand of the gardener pulled him down with a grunt about "his beds." The whole scene passed very vividly through his mind. Williams was akin to the gardener. There were no palaces for him in the next-door garden. The memory was pleasant, but as a comparison he thought that it was singularly inapt, at any rate, for use against the enemy. He smiled to remember the strange smell of the gardener's corduroys—and the great boots he wore! He had trodden once on his toes, and the boots were so thick that it was like standing on a stepping-stone.

As soon as Williams left Bernard began to read. But he could not concentrate his attention. He thought of Miss Moore's delicate white hands, and whether he could see her on the morrow. He tried to find something in her behaviour which he could construe into a sign that she cared for him a little. And marriage . . . now just when he was starting

his new life, he certainly did not wish to be tied to any one. But, after all, his hatred of marriage was merely a selfish, vague desire for personal freedom. A man stood to lose nothing —a woman everything. Yet how could a sane man want to live with a woman in an intimacy which was new and greatly important? He rebelled against a plunge in the dark in which her happiness was risked as much, if not more, than his own. . . .

Well, he thought, it's a good thing she does not care. And then at once he wished with all his heart and soul and body that she did care. Whichever line of thought he followed, he came back to the starting-point in an endless series of intricate circles . . . and before him remained the vision of her grave face with its childish large eyes. He could not drive the vision from him.

He wished that he could put everything on one side and simply say: "I love you, and want to marry you. Will you?" That was impossible. It would be untrue. He did not want to marry her or any one. He would have

to explain what he meant by love. He hardly knew that himself.

Gradually all his thoughts merged into the desire to see her again, to be in her presence. He racked his brains for an excuse to call that evening. No excuse of the faintest plausibility was forthcoming.

He went and dined at a large café where he never met any one he knew. . . . It was her custom to take Thomas for his little walk about ten every evening when they were alone. He looked at his watch. It was nearly nine. He would take an omnibus to the corner of Sloane Street and walk to the house. The desire to see her became an obsession. Nothing else mattered. If he did not see her, he would see the house in which she was moving and breathing. To be in her vicinity was better than to be at a distance from her.

The memory of the woman who had shown him what love might be rose in his mind. He wished that he could talk to her now. She was strong and kind. She made him articulate. He knew what she would say to him, and that

he would never agree with her; but she listened, and always believed that he was sincere in what he said. With her he had enjoyed the inestimable comfort of being able to say everything. Jacynth would understand how he felt about her. More than the memory of her he wanted now, though the memory of her was a possession for ever. Companionship . . . something to counteract this fiend of loneliness which confronted him always when he was not working or sleeping. The three men with whom he had lived and all the people he knew (even Conrad and the Princess) either lulled this fiend's power or gave it greater urgency. And his loneliness was strangely mingled with actual physical feeling, and yet made intolerable, as he well knew, if that feeling were satisfied by itself.

If Jacynth were to look into his eyes and tell him that she loved him, he was convinced that, once and for all, he would be a free man, and could face the world without fear and all the world's mischances without shrinking.

Marriage! a shadow to frighten a baby! The slavery of loneliness was more restricting, more deadening . . . and then there crept stealthily into his mind the ideas of the degrading familiarity that would slowly strangle any feeling, the pathetic loyalty to a past ideal, distrust of his nature. . . .

He was without backbone. Here were all his grandiloquent ideas about love being tested. Were they sound? Were they helping him? He, who believed in love, was he acting better than Williams, for instance? No, he acknowledged, he was grovelling.

But then he did not know if she cared for him. The excuse immediately dwindled before the voice which told him that he did not know if he cared for her, or what he wanted from her.

He wanted to see her—that was really all he knew, all he cared about, all that mattered—he wanted to see her that evening.

He did not think, even when he was in the street where the house stood, that he might be making a fool of himself by thus submitting to

his imperious wish. For behind all his doubts and theories glowed exuberance at being so tremendously alive as he was—and a great excitement.

He crossed the road. He had no desire to speak to her. He walked twice up and down the street slowly. As he passed the house the third time the front door opened. There was a scuffle of little feet as Thomas hurried down the steps into the street and half-way back up the steps again to meet Jacynth. She was wrapped in a cloak, with a shawl wound round her head. She wore snow-boots over her shoes and padded along the pavement. She was there; and she had spent a great part of the day with him.

His spirit was uplifted by the sight of her. He knew, as he watched her, he knew well that he loved her, and what he meant by love. It was simply that she quickened every impulse of life in him; she quickened the deep aspirations in him of which bodily desire was the symbol.

To be able to have seen a human being with

the burning clearness of vision with which he saw Jacynth, as she moved like a shadow down the dark street, was as memorable a revelation of the divine as the recorded visions of any prophets of old. Like an inspiration, it bore him beyond doubt. He left the personal clamourings. He was no longer like a spoiled child, crying for sweets. . . .

What the morrow should hold for him of sorrow or of joy he did not know. It was enough to have before him in the immediate present this great opening out of life's possibilities. That his own scope of life was big enough to contain this glory, that it should become more than a moment's vision and a memory, an actual part of his life—in a word, that his love should be realised by being returned—he did not think. To conceive that, indeed, passed his power of imagination, which was strained to its uttermost in the effort to appreciate and realise what he now saw.

He walked away, and, like the thin hum of a gnat, he heard the voice of mockery, which

told him that any lover of any girl had ecstatic moments. Then the voice was still—for very shame. That the heavens should open often in this way for many men made the event a thousand times more wonderful—transformed the world, indeed, through which such a power as this was moving. He welcomed the fact that he was an ordinary boy and that she was an ordinary girl. That such things should be happening all round him, as had happened to him that evening, filled him with a wild enthusiasm and gladness which he could hardly bear.

All the distressing little problems, sex questions, and this and that and the other, slipped into their proper place—an insignificant place—before this new fact.

But it was not new. He had known of its existence. Its reflected light he knew from his dead friend, from reading Shelley, from every generous feeling which he had ever offered to any living thing. And he knew that love was not a change of state, but an intensification.

Thoughts, clear as the shapes of spirits, floated into his mind, lived there a moment, and, leaving their fragrance, passed on to their mysterious abode—no man knows whither—as the embodied sound of music goes out into the silence of a dark night.

He remembered the world which Shelley had created in deathless poetry—a world where love ruled, in which men lived and loved as if to live and love were one; and now the chains of mortality fell from him, and he, like Prometheus, became aware of freedom—he remembered the words of Diotima at the Greek banquet, and how he had been fascinated by their mysterious suggestion of divinity in love, and now that suggestion became a discerned truth to his heart—he remembered Blake's glad song of the mating birds, and how the clearness of Blake's vision of love, like a star shining amid the clouds of his mighty fancy, made his expression of it always clear—he remembered the words of great Ralegh towards the end of his adventurous days, when among all the wreckage of his unrealised

dreams one thing remained steadfast and strong as the buttress of his soul—that

> True love is a durable fire
> In the mind ever burning,
> Never sick, never old, never dead,
> From itself never turning:

—he remembered how Donne, dauntless in sincerity, sang that body's love and soul's love could be fused into an union which brought a man very near to the divine heart of things, and how he sang that union as loyally and, for all his whimsical emphasis, as simply as he had sung in his youth the body's love, ungraced—he remembered what gave life to the thousand characters of Browning, what gave courage to the purpose of William Morris, what gave depth and humanity to the intellect of Meredith—he remembered the hymn of Spenser, and knew now why Spenser had for those who had seen heavenly beauty another standard, by which the mirth of the proud mind was sadness and all lucre loss, for he too had now beheld "the Soveraine Light from whose pure beams all perfect beauty springs"—he remembered

the poem which was the life of St. Francis, of St. Francis who saw divinity in every form of life, in the sun, in the moon, in the stars, in the grass, in the wind, in the flowers, in men and women, in birds, animals, and fishes, so clearly that he felt himself moving in an universal kinship of love—he remembered all these and many more, and the choir of spirits seemed to echo with a divine harmony the words of Christ, that God is love.

So the shadowy pageant passed on, and he was among the children of the morning.

IV

AS he closed his eyes to sleep he feared his awakening. He tried to assure himself that during sleep his spirit would go where high thoughts lived; but he knew that he had no control over his spirit—yet. He feared also the word disillusion, but before he slept he looked through that ogre, created by cleverness, and knew that disillusion was apt to be man's name for his own incapacity to live up to the truth which youth's ardour had revealed.

He slept like a child without dreaming. When consciousness returned, he was aware of a great peace and of new strength. There was a tremor of awe in the atmosphere, like the sun's warmth over flowers in the summer, and a hush as of suspense. A presence, stirring and deeply exciting, influenced him as surely as that dreadful presence which moved in the

darkness, and which he knew to be Fear. This presence was as mysterious and strong and pervading as that other. It was the spirit of life and of light. He did not know that its name was Joy.

For a moment he had risen a little beyond the limits of personality. For a moment he had breathed the higher air of another world in which doubt and anxiety were not, where Time was not the master, and Death moved with bowed head, a servant.

With the future he had no need to meddle. It was beyond his or any man's complete control. But he must strive to keep himself so sensitive to what might happen that his eyes should never be dim to the passing glory of the moment: to pain and fear only he must become hardened.

Jacynth had shown him all this. At her approach the heavens, as the Jewish poets used to say, had opened to his vision. What happiness would she allow him to give her? What happiness would he be able to give her? That, too, belonged to the future, into which he

dared not look, not now from fear, but from an instinctive reverence which he did not understand. He only saw himself working, working to try and express some of the wonder which he knew life to contain. He could even imagine another man being able to bring all this bigness into his life, to live up to its daily standard, and to remain always fresh and sensitive to every tiniest form of beauty and of joy: but he could not imagine such a life for himself. Things never happened in that way in the world. The man who had the power to see the possible beauty of love, had not the power to bring that love into his life; and the man who had the love lapsed into contentment, and ceased to realise the greatness of his possession.

Perhaps, after all, love was only a vision; but even if it were, and nothing more substantial than a dream, the dream was better than all worldly gain, more abundant, and more life-giving. He could not imagine himself untroubled by loneliness and all the old enemies of his present existence. Without

them life would be a kind of triumph—not for him. Why should it happen to him? What had he done to deserve even what he had got? Merit must come into the matter in some mysterious way. Not for him was such a triumph waiting—not for him.

But he could make a man worthy. He knew the secret. He knew that it was possible, in this world even of horror, for love to hold dominion over two friends. He knew that such joy as this could exist. He dreamed how these two (they must be working at the unattainable) would draw strength for work from their love, and strength for their love from beauty—that beauty which breathed everywhere, which was the ultimate source of all strength and all life.

> From link to link it circulates
> The soul of all the world.

He had never felt the meaning of those lines before. He must begin to read everything again. He saw more deeply now: all pictures he cared for, and all the beauty of the flowers and sky and trees and the sea would have fresh

meaning. He was a little nearer the heart of things. And as he grew he would always be finding new beauties. There could be no end to this new life into which he had been taken.

He wondered that he was not dejected and despairing because his love was not returned. He seemed to remember that hopeless love (whatever that might mean) was a stock subject of romance. But as he was seeing things more clearly than he had ever seen them before, he saw that to love was the important thing: to be loved in return lifted the effort of life upon another plane. He smiled to think how impossible it would be to explain this to Williams; and he was conscious of an odd desire to do so, to subject his faith to the test of mockery and explanation—very like a boy at college who in the changing-room before a football match suddenly announced during a pause in the talk about the ground's condition, "I should like all you fellows to know that I am a Christian." He was amused at himself as much as he had been amused at the boy,

but he had sympathy with the boy now. He knew how urgent was the desire in a man, who was glowing with new faith, to proclaim that faith to the world. Fortunately he had other means of expression than to collect a crowd in the Strand and announce to them in a loud voice that love might be the revelation of the divine.

Let men know the machinery of their bodies, and have it under their control, then there was some chance for the whole man to get a little more speedily perhaps on the way from his simian ancestry. There was no antagonism between the body and the soul. The mischief lay in the silly mystery in which bodily functions were shrouded: the more important the function for youth to know, the denser was the cloud of mystery; and mystery encouraged secrecy, and secrecy dishonesty. It was all a glorification of the body, based on ignorance, from which sprang the superstition about sin and the code of modern morality. But light was at last breaking through the cloud of ignorance: men were beginning to realise the

responsibility of new knowledge, and the discoveries of science were being applied to morality—a gigantic drama!

Having found material for more than six lives' work, he went out for a walk, to see what was happening in the world at which he was about to hurl his great works. It seemed almost unfair to take the world at a disadvantage so great as its stolid unpreparedness exposed. The tremendous humour of it delighted him. In the face of almost every one who passed him he discovered at first some plot to reform his neighbours—and perhaps himself; some effort, conscious or unconscious, to leave the ancestral ape a little further behind. That was the effort of all life. They simply could not help it. Willy-nilly, they were undergoing the slow process of evolution. He looked at the sky above him, and wondered if the process led eventually back again to its simian beginning, or onwards to some state as far above the present condition of man as man, without undue self-deception, might consider

himself above the monkey. How far could the general consciousness of life develop? Supposing every cabdriver understood the ideals of Shelley!—ideals, it was merely the name for facts a little beyond the consciousness of the majority! Supposing ten per cent of mankind had a tenth of the imaginative power of Shelley!—imagination, it was merely the power to see everything in its place, the blue scylla and the blue sky, the drunken woman and the Princess, one's own life and the world-process of slow change . . .

He climbed up the steps of a Hammersmith omnibus. He wanted to see Jacynth, so he went. He hardly considered where he was going, or why he was going. He did not trouble to think out some excuse, or whether it was customary to call in the morning, or whether he would see her, or what he would say to her. He did not think about any of the hundred details which would have distracted him before. The future could take care of itself It was quite unimportant.

The servant said that Miss Moore was in her room, and it was not until she had left the dining-room, into which he had been shown, that his frame of mind changed. Then he became so suddenly and so intensely shy, that, if he could have moved, he would have bolted from the house. His brain was alive; it was turned not on to the bigness of life and its possibilities, but on to himself. He was appalled by the immensity of his impertinence.

The door opened and Jacynth came in.

"I am sorry, but Great-grandmother's out."

"I came to see you," he said.

It seemed odd that the clock should tick peacefully on after such a confession, a freak of time that it was only a few hours since he had seen her last. And a voice repeated dully within him that he must find something to say.

Jacynth walked across the room and looked out of the window. He counted ten ticks of the clock before she said:

"I like to have visitors of my own."

He began to count again; he could not prevent himself from counting; and then with a feeling of relief he said, "How is Thomas?"

"Come to my sitting-room: you shall see him."

"I should like to immensely."

They went upstairs.

"It's smaller than your room," she said, opening a door. "You'll stay to lunch, of course?"

"I should like to immensely," he repeated, stooping to pat Thomas, who disregarded him.

"Then I'll go and tell the servant to lay for two, if you will excuse me. I should have been by myself if you had not come."

He was alone in her room. It was as neat as her person, and fragrant of her personality. He saw a tiny grand piano (it was open), a bookcase, in which every book was beautifully bound, no knick-knacks anywhere, and sense of space because there were few pictures on the high walls.

She came back with some patterns in her hand, and asked him to help her choose the material for a new coat and skirt. Swiftly the influence of her presence set him entirely at his ease. He put off searching out the reason for this to a future time.

"I don't know a bit," he said; "little snips of stuff like that are no guide to me."

"That would look tony, I think," she said, laying a piece of grey-blue tweed on her sleeve. "Don't you?"

Her gravity was irresistible. He laughed with delight as he said:

"Yes, it would."

"It's a very serious matter, you know."

And Thomas, leaping up, seized the bunch of cloths from her hand and shook them, growling. This did not make Bernard stop laughing.

"How disgraceful of you!" she said to Thomas, as she took them away.

"He's tired of always wearing the same wiry little coat," Bernard managed to say.



that he well knew it
play in her room, an
basket, from which, w
kept a bright eye fix
cloths.

Jacynth explained h

"When he gets ex
small for him," she sa
the bookcase once and

"I do like your roo
books?"

"Do. I have very
like to get nicely boun

He found that they
and poetry, and the
volumes of Thoreau.

"Oh, by Jove, Th
"Are you keen?"

fire to dry themselves by that we knew of?"

"Yes, and the musquash who fumbled for melons?"

"Rather. Oh, where does it come? A godlike passage—when some ass told him he was reading too much in the newspapers—Thoreau said—how does it go? oh, yes—he might as well have advised the sloth-bear—that fellow who crawls so slowly from bough to bough, and cries 'Aie' from time to time—to beware of dancing."

"That's in the letters," she said, coming and taking the book from the shelf. "Look. Here it is."

She found the passage immediately. He confessed to misquotation.

"I like the 'Week on the Concord' much the best. What he says about friendship and religion and Chaucer—magnificent. Whatever any one says, I think it's a bigger book than 'Walden.'"

"I like it best, too. But I know nothing about literature, of course."

I've read your bo
like it."

He looked at her. H
even the gentlest snub, b
ably humbled.

"I *am* glad," he said
We'll—I mean, I'll—writ
reading yet. You see."

He began to tell her his
as he talked to her the
listened with obvious ir
he finished she was silent
fire.

"Do you think I shall l
he asked.

"I don't know you very v

That hurt him; and
pleased him very much

she forced herself to go on. "I've nothing to give that you want."

"You don't know what I want," he said in a low voice, and then, "You like seeing me?" he demanded.

"Yes."

"Often?"

"Yes."

"Whatever happens, do you think . . . sometimes . . ."

He meant when she married the man for whom he was confident that she cared; he could not be more definite, for fear of hurting her feelings.

"Till then often . . . and perhaps . . . well . . . it might be a comfort. It's nice to have a little friend to go about with . . . a help even?"

"A great help," she said gravely, "for me. But you'll be disappointed. I'm afraid. I've no ideas."

"You'll let me risk that?"

"Yes."

He gave a great sigh.



" People don't usu

" People are fools.

" Why should the to most people."

" You have to me

" Yes."

" May I call you J

" Of course you ma

" Why are you unh

" I'm stupid and happy."

" You're stupid to l of yourself."

Bernard spoke with

" It's a true one," s

" I don't think so. own power."

stand—a combination of strength and sweetness. And you're the most utterly honest person I've ever met."

His voice went up the scale of assertion, and his authority became dictatorial—imperial.

"That's a new point of view," she said.

"Let me commend it to your consideration," he said, and though he was in lively earnest, the pompousness of the phrase struck him, and he laughed. "After all, we are what others think us. In a way we all create our own world round us, you know. It's a fearfully exciting idea—the endless terrific variety, why, we change almost as much as the sky or the earth or the wind or the sea.

> Rejoice that we are hurled
> From change to change unceasingly,
> Our soul's wings never furled."

He chanted slowly, beating out the measure of the lines with the whole length of his arm. Thomas, rising, stepped out of the basket and stretched himself.

" You have a grea

" Yes, a splendid

" You must read

they went downstair

" You mightn't be

" I think I could,"

When Bernard w
hour and a half aft
He was gladly sure
He thought no furth
the next day, and o
arranged to see the
from one to two, and
go to his rooms, wh
enough of his book t
was all about.

She roused in him

ness, and she always understood him; and though he ceased very soon to be surprised, he never ceased to be pleased at this. The wall of distance decreased between them.

He did not know that he was wooing her in the only way in which she could be wooed. He still connected that in his mind with passionate protestations which seemed unreal to him, though he believed in their reality for others. He could not "make love"; the phrase seemed an exact expression for something rather false. Love came or did not come. Her body mattered little, if its surrender were not a symbol of something far greater. But of this he did not think. He was too glad that she was his friend, that she was happy in his company, that she was interested in his ideas, to want more. Was it more? Different was perhaps an exacter term.

He never supposed that she cared for him as much as he for her. The thought of what that would mean staggered his imagination. Part of her power was that she gave him a

was infinitely longe
hours seems occasi
measure age by yea
of her departure to
very near, he finish
he had expressed m
friendship than he
express before, by s
it would make no
you really cared for
"I don't." And he
would be more alive
of her words passed t
the idea which he w
was silent. But he c
to go out into the
abrupt remark disco

something had happened, and neither knew precisely what it was.

Alone in his own room Bernard understood. At first an intoxicating joy took possession of him, and a conviction that she cared for him. Then the pendulum swung back to fury at his own impertinence in thinking that such a thing were possible. At last he grew comparatively calm and faced the position. He saw it in this way. Was he prepared for the test of bringing love into the daily routine of his actual life? Was he able to realise his dreams? To lift his life upon another plane? Love meant an absolute annihilation of self. He trusted her absolutely, but he did not think of the help which she might give him. The matter seemed to rest between himself and his God.

He welcomed the great test. He felt strong enough for this or anything; and then the calm disappeared from him, because, as he sat gazing in front of him, he saw her face quite distinctly, and in her eyes was the kindness of love. While he held his breath he

"Jacynth," he cri

Were his dreams
a reflection of the
presence, or were
reality? Or would
it came into his lif
of his brightest drea
doubted; for a mon
from his present gr
be better never to
become indifferent.
fect memory, and if
have that memory
could not believe in j
phantom of the mind
care for him, consola
But if she cared . . .

The next day

Woodlands. She was staying there for three weeks. During that time he imagined that he would be able to think his position quietly out, because at that moment he was just able to stop the voice that clamoured against the length of time which those three weeks involved.

But he slept fitfully that night; he kept waking with a start, and once he woke crying out her name.

His woman brought him a letter when she called him in the morning. He had never seen Jacynth's handwriting that he remembered, but he knew the letter came from her. And he was right.

"DEAR BERNARD" (the letter ran),—"Last night Conrad said I might ask a visitor to Woodlands, teasing me because he says I am cold-hearted about my friends. Can't you cut short your visit to your uncle, and come on the 28th for a week—if only to punish Conrad? We shall all be glad if you can come, but, as you know, there is nothing to do.



He wondered why s
invitation till she s
could go. It would
to eight days, but t
quence. After all,
think about. He ne
had such an attract
were not really abou
ideal woman who
blustered himself in
idea was true. He h
fast, and set fiercely
might claim attenti
centrate, writing feve
hour. Then suddenl
to find her letter and
it, and sat in his arm-
of him. He was sta

The clock showed him that the time was half-past eleven. Four long hours must crawl by before he saw her at half-past three. Motionless he sat, and sullenly opposed the marshalled troops of hopes and fears that fought for entry into his mind. The silence vexed him. The distant noise gave the encircling stillness oppressive life. He sprang up—resolutely as before—hurried on his boots, and went out like a man who has at length remembered an appointment.

He crossed the road and mounted the first omnibus that passed. He sat on the front seat and stared in front of him. The great buildings, the traffic, the people in the streets, the very streets themselves seemed to be unreal, to be unsubstantial, like objects in some fantastic masque. He stared in front of him till the conductor tapped his shoulder and told him that this was Liverpool Street station. So he got out.

From Broad Street station trains ran to Hampstead Heath. He took a ticket. But he changed his mind as he was nearing the



City!" said a voice.
the hand of Ephraim
"How are you?"
"Oh, I'm almost
Smith cheerfully; an
"Let's lunch toget
"All right," said B
"I was sorry to b
wired," said Smith,
He continued to chat
nised the fact that b
same power, somewha
but he was too appa
love's scope to be abl
it for more than an in
During lunch he
such a keen interest,

that he had not been nearly sociable enough in the past, and decided to turn over a new leaf forthwith. Bernard was obliged to back as gently out of the project as possible, and felt a little ashamed of himself for having deceived Smith with the prospect of friendship. He insisted on paying for Smith's lunch to make atonement.

It was incredible to him that Smith should still be recovering from the same ailment, while he himself had changed, as a butterfly emerges from a chrysalis, so that it appeared that the man who had lived at the Bloomsbury house was the discarded shell of his present self. Or was he the same? Was there no difference between Smith and himself more essential than their difference in stature—his own six inches to the good? Who was the final arbiter? There would be satisfaction in knowing.

He went back to his rooms, and after waiting for half an hour, he started for South Kensington. As he neared the house calm, like stupor, held him. The skin tight-



But she turned to loc
desk as she said :

" Can you come ? '

" Yes. Thank you
me."

He had the odd s
his own voice. He st
at the face of the Fr
hung over the mant
and sat down. She
She smiled at Thomas
his basket. There wa

Bernard followed t
winding stream in th
strange regular curves
arches of the tiny sto
bushes growing on the

"Yes."

"You never say so."

"I never can say things. What should I say?"

"Oh, nothing."

He was observing the country on the other side of the Madonna—the small houses and towers, and in the far distance the spires of a minute cathedral . . .

"I've never had a . . ." She began and stopped.

Something began to beat against Bernard's temples—violently as his heart was beating. Through the tumult in his head he heard a voice—that strange voice must be his own—saying quickly, without any expression:

"I love you . . . I want to marry you. . . . That's all."

The little hills in the landscape began to move as he looked at them. He stood waiting . . . waiting. He did not know for what. He seemed to be passing among the tumbling hills, farther and farther away from the small high room. He was brought back with a

swift rush. He heard a catch in her breath. He turned. There were tears in her eyes, a smile on her face. He knelt by her. He hid his face in her neck. Her arms drew him more closely to her.

When Bernard rose to his feet Jacynth whispered:

"Friede, voll schönheit."

"Peace, full of beauty. You darling."

Soon Bernard began to laugh.

"I lunched with Ephraim Smith," he said.

"Who is he?"

"A rum little beggar; used to live with him; moves . . . moves his head from side to side when he reads. . . ."

"Doesn't every one?"

"No; only . . . only their eyes."

His voice broke; he suddenly began to cry.

"Dear, what is it?" cried Jacynth, coming to him.

"Hysterical . . . foolishness . . . all this . . . it's . . . it's too wonderful."

She did not at first speak. She put her

hands against his forehead. She leaned close to him. Then she said (there were long pauses between stammered sentences, for it was not easy for her to say what she said):

"I want you to understand—I want you to understand that I—that—you hate marriage—marriage could not make me more yours—I mean—you may want your friend to caress you—be a woman—not always—not necessarily a wife—I trust you and myself, and—you understand?"

He let her go on, alert to know the full measure of her courage and faith. He thought a girl who had the delicacy and the strength to give herself without a business contract belonged only to his realm of dreams. She went on:

"The only bond between us is our love . . . nothing could be more sacred . . ."

"You mean you want to go on living your present life with me as your lover?"

"Not want . . . would . . . gladly; you're angry?" she faltered.

"Angry!" He got up and held both her

hands in his hands. "Jacynth," he said, "I suppose if I'd had your honesty I shouldn't have said I wanted . . . to . . . to marry you, except that I'd do anything to be able to love you, to caress you, but . . . but, dear, I know what I want now; I want more than just to be your—your lover. I want you as a companion for always, to live with you."

Her face was turned from his. She spoke in an abrupt voice, quickly:

"You know nothing about me."

"Enough to know I want you as a companion always."

"I was an illegitimate child."

"You're still a child."

"I've loved another man."

"I've loved another woman—do love her."

She was silent, still looking away from him. He said in a low voice:

"Dear, you've forgotten to remind me about your sullen nature."

"Perhaps I shan't be so dreadfully sullen now."

"Who knows? Smile at me."

She did not move.

"Smile at me," he persisted.

She turned and clung to him.

"I'll be your . . . your companion for always," she said.

V

"NOTHING has given me such happiness for a long time," said Conrad Leith to Bernard. "The Princess and I are delighted—delighted."

He had taken Bernard into his room immediately on Bernard's arrival at Woodlands. Bernard shook his hand in silence, relieved—glad, because though the Princess had written him a letter, in which Conrad's pleasure was mentioned, he had not heard from Conrad himself, and he was naturally quick to imagine many reasons for this and many questions which Conrad might want answered. Conrad had loomed before him as Jacynth's guardian, overshadowing for the time his appearance as friend. Bernard had not, however, had time to make the shadow very black.

"The Princess wrote me a heavenly letter.

Listen." He took Conrad's arm to prevent him from opening the door. "She asked me—asked me if she might extend the goblin relationship of great-grandmother to me."

Conrad looked at him over his glasses.

"Come and see her," he said.

Mrs. Fearon was in the music-room. Her eyes shone with joy.

"Curdie, my dear boy," she said, and she kissed him. "I am glad—glad—glad."

He stooped to kiss her hand.

"You—you and Conrad," he said, "don't just welcome me—me whom you've only known two months—you simply stretch out both your arms to me. It utterly does for me."

"Have faith in joy," said Mrs. Fearon. The remark was not at first very luminous to Bernard, for she had a way of skipping much to reach the essential at once. And Bernard was pursuing in his mind a clue which kept escaping amongst the rich growth of gratitude. But at length he cried out excitedly:

"I have it!"

"What?" asked Jacynth, who had just come into the room.

"What an ass I am! George Macdonald, of course. The Princess and the Goblin. I used to love it when I was a kid."

"I do still," said Jacynth.

"I almost knew it by heart, and now my life itself is simply turned into a fairy-tale. Oh, do always call me Curdie!"

"Only sometimes, I think."

"Look here," he said, laughing, to Jacynth. "Don't start sitting on me for the things I have read and forgotten."

He had come by the same train as before, in exactly the same way, with this difference—that he had been at the station five minutes earlier even than last time, and that Jacynth was at Rugby to meet him. All through tea, which Mary brought in (the little girl was neater and more charming), wave after wave of joy came over Bernard. He kept on realising, as it were, for the first time, whenever Jacynth looked at him, that she wanted to live with him, and that Conrad, his friend, and the

Princess, his goblin grandmother (she was more beautiful and more gracious than ever)—that these two, who watched over Jacynth and loved her, were glad that she wanted to live with him. Everything went on in the same way: there was no change of any kind: only the presence of new joy was felt in the room.

"What is Joy?" said Bernard suddenly.

The Princess smiled.

"Can't you feel it everywhere like the smell of flowers, like the wind, like sunshine, like life itself?"

"Being really alive," said Jacynth.

"You've good authority for that, Miss Pet," said Conrad. He got up and took a book from the shelf. "Listen." Then he read: "Joy is but the name of a passion in which the mind passes to a greater perfection or power of thinking, as grief is the name of a passion in which it passes to a less."

"Yes, I remember. But why—now especially—do people think it's rather stupid to be happy or a sign of stupidity? They almost

pride themselves on their own miseries and the general miseries of life. Look at Flaubert and those fellows, the de Goncourts; they sought out horrors, and the more frightful the horrors the more life-like. *C'est la Vie*, they write after describing a brothel or a criminal lunatic or an operation. There's much more of *La Vie* in gladness and beauty—must be."

"Disease, age, death are not the chief foes; too much has been said against the inevitable. Selfishness, indifference, fear—these are the enemies of happiness."

"All life is spiritual," said the Princess. "Everything comes back to that."

"Yes. I've used those words," said Bernard. "What do they mean?"

"That life comes from without, and that all life is one."

No one spoke. Solemnity brooded over the room. The lovers, tried by long years, and the young lovers were thinking about the eternal question of life, for which each must find and hold his own answer.

Presently Conrad took the arm of the old

lady, and they went away to his room. Here he put his hand on her shoulder, and looking into her eyes he said:

"My Princess."

Tears brightened the gladness in her eyes. They spoke of their past life. For them the onward path was defined and clear before the shining uncertainty of death.

"Dear," she said, "our lives have brought a little truth, a little joy, a little beauty into the world?"

"I think so."

"We can welcome the next step with our hands unfettered and uplifted?"

"Readily. For us can be no separation. So long as consciousness exists, I shall be conscious of you. And afterwards?"

"Ah! who knows. We may together make one soul—a better soul."

"I wonder. All the love each has given—perhaps——"

They were silent.

"Those dear children," said Conrad.

"At the beginning."

They continued each other's thought. Few words were needed.

"Beginning their life together."

"The boy has courage . . ."

"She——"

"Ah! strength. From whom?"

"Child of joy, born of sorrow. Your influence."

"Say, our."

He smiled.

"Capacity for joy."

"They both have. Fearless too."

"Dear children, dear children. What awaits them?"

"One grows more and more interrogatory."

"About some things, yes, and more patiently so always, and more humbly."

"Lack of honest resentment."

"Or growth of peace, dear."

"Your very fragrance, my Princess."

So they talked quietly by the crackling fire. For them the sun was beginning to set—not without the beauty of the dawn and with greater certainty of promise.

In the other room only, another world.

"Jacynth," cried Bernard when they were alone, "I'll tell you what I want our life to be. I want you to work harder than you've ever worked before."

"Oh, *do* you?" she said, laughing. They both laughed, welcoming laughter as a relief to their pent-up happiness.

"And I shall sit with my feet on the fender," he said.

"Leave off laughing."

"I can't."

"Be serious, and go on with what you were saying."

"Without work we should get rusty. Our love would suffer as soon as ever our work suffered. We must make the beauty and joy more our own by giving it expression, by letting it into the world. Joy is so rare. It's a tremendous responsibility. If it makes us selfish, we're absolutely cooked. O the things there are to be done. . . . What does old Conrad do?"

"So much."

"What?"

"His business is to make dressing-cases—all the fittings. He knows all his workmen personally. They adore him."

"So I should think."

"He translates. He's a prominent member of some Socialist society. Devils for them, he says. Then he makes experiments in Mendelism."

"What's that?"

"To do with heredity. Waltzing mice and sweet-peas. He sends his results to a friend of his—a Birmingham professor."

"I knew the old beggar worked like blazes—though he seems to have read everything and to have time always to see people. He's a wonderful fellow. Meeting him seemed to set me on my feet—going. I messed and worried about myself, you know. Now, I'm going to work."

"He thinks you'll do good work."

"Does he? How do you know?"

"I asked him."

"Did you? You darling! Do *you* think so?"

"Yes."

"But then, you know nothing about literature."

"Bernard!"

She laughed. He kissed her many times.

Then he said: "It is queer."

"What is?"

"Our coming together."

"Yes. . . . I believe I cared for you almost directly I saw you. I wanted you to like me."

"Something in me simply must have known."

"I'd been hurt. I was afraid. I hardened myself."

"Not so fearfully—we've not wasted much time."

"You are a dear!" she said.

The door opened.

"Now then," said Conrad. "It's time to dress for dinner."

He came into the room. Neither moved from the sofa. He put a hand on each of them.

"Dear children," he said.

The firelight flickered over their three faces.

Jacynth moved her cheek gently against his fingers.

"Our high adventure," said Bernard. "Shall we pull it through?"

Conrad paused for a moment. Then, pressing either hand more firmly on them to add conviction to his words, he said:

"I am sure you will."

After dinner Conrad asked them if they had made any plans for the future.

"There's one consolation in our all being queer people," he said; "to please us best you will do just exactly what you like. But if Miss Pet hankers after a function, I shall have a severe attack of influenza without any doubt."

"I want a ceremony—a long one," said Jacynth.

"Oh ho!"

"With musical service too."

"Do you?"

"The beginning of our companionship must be celebrated."

"I want you to read the first speech of Prometheus—his mastery of pain and hatred—

and then the whole of the last two acts, and between them I want Great-grandmother to play the Beethoven."

"A divine service," cried Bernard, with enthusiasm.

"Just for once your voice will hold out."

She went to find the book.

"I think you must do as they wish, dear," said the Princess.

He raised his brows, and with a smile she added: "As we wish, then."

They settled themselves, and he began to read. By their worship of beauty the two worlds of the young and the old were closely united. The love of beauty produces sympathy which is deeper than any other sympathy and more generous. The occasion lent a profound significance to the reading and to the music, and a solemnity which was real and intimate. It would be difficult to say which of them felt the beauty more keenly: the two friends who by their life had proved the great poem's truth, or the two friends whose hearts desired that for them also it might be true.

Does Beauty gain new life by human recognition? Then once more, with the freedom of Prometheus, mankind became free from the tyranny of fear and hatred and despair: once more the spirit of love passed through the world, leaving freshness in her track and joy, to the stern new ruler who proclaimed love's sovereignty, and the earth reflected the approach of a brighter dawn: once more the large sky echoed with the glad, the triumphant song of the Earth and the Moon; again the stern voice of Demogorgon summoned the Earth, the Moon, the ethereal Dominations, the happy dead, all living things and Man, to listen, and at his summons the whole universe resounded once more with the cry, "Speak, thy strong words shall never pass away," and the implacable voice of truth spoke the great lines which contain the very secret of life:

> To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
> To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
> To defy Power which seems omnipotent;
> To love and bear; to hope till Hope creates
> From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
> Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;

This like thy glory, Titan is to be
Good, great, and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire and Victory.

The reading stopped. Silence, which held dominion outside over the wide spaciousness of the land, came upon the room.

Then the Princess rose and kissed Jacynth and Bernard.

"My dear ones," she said. "My dear ones, remember always what goes to the making of Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory." And, taking Conrad's arm, she left them alone together.





PART III



Wohl an!

I

THERE was no reason that Bernard (or any one else that mattered) could see why Jacynth and he should not begin to live together at once. On the other hand, there was, what appeared to both of them, a profoundly excellent reason why they should do so. It was a crucial year in Bernard's life, and he wanted love to come into his life just when, according to the general opinion, such a distraction would be fatal to him. His own opinion was—and he was so confident of this now that he would have pitied any one who disputed it—that love was not a distraction, but a state of being, the basis almost of life. There could never be, for instance, a choice between love and work, where

love was deeper than a whim, and work more important than a hobby.

He staked everything on the throw, fearlessly. The future was too uncertain to consider. That being the case, as he put it to Jacynth, it was wise and right to squeeze the last drop of life out of the moment, and to welcome what awaited them with arms stretched gladly out—the only attitude towards the Unknown. To creep and cower and be cautious . . . he became incoherent with indignation.

"Let's know what there is to be known and then have at it towards middle age or death or failure or success."

And Jacynth—her custom was to stand, her elbow on the mantelpiece, looking into the fire while he was talking—did not merely agree with him; she spurred him quietly on to a greater, gladder confidence in life and in herself. How she did this he could not tell. He teased her about it, and she insisted that it was one of his illusions about her. He then explained at ardent length the fallacy in the

idea expressed by the word illusion, and how the word was detestable to him. One of the few really true things he had said to her before they came together happened to be that all the wisdom of the world was reflected in her eyes. And her eyes meanwhile just twinkled.

Accordingly, having found a tiny house in Clareville Grove (good fortune followed them, as Conrad pointed out), they took it, and having spent a long day rioting at shops amongst house linen and kitchen utensils and carpets and other household indispensables, they visited a registrar's office and began to live in the small house together.

Naturally Bernard had many misgivings. He put his old nature into the new surroundings, and saw a rather cantankerous fellow about to live with a girl who was accustomed to the company of the best man and the best woman he knew. He told her this with slight exaggeration, and begged her not to have any preconceived

standards of conduct for him. He told her of his dreadful moods of depression (somewhat tardily perhaps), and saw no reason why they should not recur. To all he said she smiled, quite untroubled by his auguries. He insisted that the leopard never changed its spots, that no man's character altered, and was nearly annoyed at her for refusing to see the importance of the matter.

At first, each day Bernard feared the coming of some unpleasantness. None came. He worked happily and well. Then slowly he understood. Before, he had no one but himself to consider, and that, being (however interesting) a limited subject of consideration, resulted very soon in depression; but now he had some one else to consider and to know, namely, Jacynth — the point was so simple that he had taken a long time to observe it.

Gradually the sweetness wore in. All the little details of life, which had exasperated him by their manifold pettiness, received something

of the grace of homage. And Jacynth not only told him that she was much happier than she had ever been before (that he could hardly have believed), but she looked much happier —looked happier because of him. And, more than that—just as he knew that he was working better than he had ever worked, so Jacynth sang better, not only in his opinion (he owned to the possibility of prejudice), but in the opinion of all who heard her.

In what he looked upon as the general downfall and reconstruction of himself, one characteristic remained the same. He encouraged it now with all his power. Previously it had hurt him to be obliged to be always seeing everything—all the common facts of life—for the first time. Now this faculty (as he called it) gave zest to his gladness and his will. Under the benignant influence of joy he was attaining to his old ideal; he was becoming more sensitive to every form of beauty, and against personal pain and fear only he

was becoming hardened. Pain and unhappiness, which he saw in others, stung him and kept him alive to the responsibility of his own joy. He fought to gain control over his medium of expression that as far as in him lay he might help to promote a more general happiness among men. If he could only make one or two men happier because he had lived, if he could only open the eyes of one or two men even to the beauty that was in the world! And Jacynth never thought him presumptuous.

"Falsehood and ignorance," he cried out one day to her. "We'll fight them together."

"Yes," she answered, and the look she gave him brought tears into his eyes.

The spring came. Bernard was ashamed that he had never before observed the full beauty of spring's advent. He wondered how far it showed weakness and how far strength that Jacynth was able to give him so much. Was it entirely a question of temperament?

There were men who lived at the full measure of their power alone—or seemed to . . . the possibilities of life were quite without end. Still, for him—ah! without question . . . now for the first time he seemed free and able to put his full strength into his work. Would it be so always? The future did not frighten him. Was his joy due to the spirit of youth? Ten more years, and they would be middle-aged; ten years of middle age, and then . . . how long could a man keep his faculties unimpaired by old age?

He could imagine how old men thought and felt; but he could not imagine himself an old man. Till then there were many springs—many long summer evenings—much work. . . .

His thoughts now came back not to himself, but to Jacynth; and if she were sitting with him he would throw himself down before her and kiss her feet.

"It's the same for me, dear, too," she would say, understanding. She breathed in beauty and joy quite naturally, as one who has quietly

waited for it, like a child; the ugliness of some of her past life and the loneliness seemed unreal as a child's nightmare: there seemed to have been no need for her to suffer, nothing for her to learn. So Bernard thought, realising how six years ago he would not have seen or valued the beauty in his present life. And he tried to track down an elusive theory of intuition and experience in his mind to the ultimate difference between a man and a woman. But the scent was too lightly laid, and he was soon lost in thickets.

New friends Bernard made, besides Thomas, who became devoted to him, and he also saw more of his old friends, of whom during previous months he had seen less than he liked—at first through slackness, and afterwards for the better reason of being too busy. But somehow Williams he had not seen since the last untimely visit to his rooms. Perhaps the verification of his absurd prophecy had something to do with this; perhaps he felt that Cecil Williams was a little out of the present picture.

One day, however, in the early summer he said to Jacynth :

" We must ask Williams to dinner. He called, you remember, when you were out with Conrad. He's a really good chap underneath."

" Yes," said Jacynth, " we will."

" Give him a choice of two evenings before we go to Woodlands. You don't like him much ? "

" He never seems to me to be quite real," she said.

" Oh, no materialist can be that," laughed Bernard.

" What is a materialist ? "

" A blind puppy—who only believes what he sees. But I'm fond of Cecil Williams. I don't know why. He's an animal, you know, with good brains, and kind. I like insulting him."

" How queer ! " said Jacynth.

" That's what you said about our walk through the mist, do you remember ? "

" The walk ? Yes."

So Williams was asked, and came on the evening before their week at Woodlands.

"My dear Bernard," said Williams, after Jacynth had left the dining-room, "you have done very well for yourself. You have been married nearly six months and look the picture of health and happiness. How is it done?"

"You should try it."

"I fear I am not sufficiently domestic by nature."

"Domestic! Do you mean that I am? What beastly words you use!"

"My vocabulary never pleased you." He waved his cigarette. "I love all women too well to settle down quite comfortably with one."

Bernard laughed. "You love yourself too well, my friend."

"Possibly. I cannot take women seriously enough. I wish in moments of depression that I were made like you, who find a panacea for all the evils of life in one little girl."

"Or rather in the love I feel for one woman."

"The distinction evades me."

"It would. But do tell me. How would *you* explain it?"

"Your present satisfaction in life? Very simply, my dear Bernard; but truth is apt to give you offence."

"Bunkum! tell me."

"Celibacy was playing havoc with your nerves, and they are now soothed."

"So much more, so much more," said Bernard to himself, and to Williams, "Then any woman would have done?"

"Exactly. Better perhaps a negative woman such as you have happened upon—less likely to irritate your hypersensitive nature."

"You think Jacynth negative?"

"With all courteous deference, I do."

"What do you mean by negative?"

"Pliant, unassertive, docile."

"How amusing you are! It *is* interesting to see how a man with as much brain

as you can go so hopelessly wrong. Yet not wrong exactly, but you only see the dreary unimportant half of any truth. Poor devil!"

"I manage to get along somehow," said Williams (tickled by Bernard's pity), in the drooping voice of a penitent.

"And how is my Conrad Leith?" he asked and sighed. "Do you approve of him as a father-in-law, if I may call him so to simplify the position?"

"It's not very complex, is it, you absurd chap? The more I see him, the more magnificent I think he is."

"I look in the papers now with really tender interest, to see if, for your sake, he has at last righted—what is the lady's name? ah, yes—Mrs. Fearon. Now you have taken the little girl . . ."

"Drop it, you irreverent rascal. It's no good trying to get me into a rage."

"I hoped to rouse a little more of the abuse to which I am accustomed from you; and then, having broken down your reserve,

to learn the real secret of how to be happy though married from one who has tried both, as the papers have it. Only I must say you never gave bachelordom quite a fair trial. Having done so myself, I am more than anxious to learn the secrets of the less romantic but more blessed state."

"My love for Jacynth," said Bernard quietly, "is a sacred thing."

"Of course, my dear Bernard, of course," said Williams suavely. "But could you not with great reverence and your habitual delicacy of expression, touch the surface of the matter? Are you not desirous of my reform? It is now a long time since I saw you. Could you not, for the sake of old times, give me one little outburst on the joys of wedlock, the sanctity . . ."

"No good," said Bernard, laughing. "Let's go upstairs."

"You are inexorable?"

"Quite."

"How unkind of you, Bernard," he said, putting his cigarette end carefully out.

They went upstairs.

"Your husband is growing up, I am afraid, Mrs. Linnell."

"Why?" asked Jacynth.

"He is becoming reserved. Although I specially asked him to descant even shortly upon the true secret of wedded happiness, of which he is—as who would not be in his case?—so conspicuous an example, he was dumb. The sinner pleading for the bread of grace was repulsed, the stone of a lofty pity was alone vouchsafed to him. A harsh and I may say an ungallant apostle—of the ancient order."

"You should be terser, Cecilia," said Bernard. "You are becoming too elaborate to be funny. And if you cease to be amusing, I'm blowed if I see what you're here for."

"Or any man? Beauty" (he bowed his head towards the lady) "is its own justification."

"You are an old fraud," said Bernard. "Don't you remember saying Conrad Leith's

ward was the heaviest thing you ever took down to dinner ? "

" No," said Williams, unperturbed. " My lips would have split to utter such a preposterous misstatement."

" I wasn't very talkative on that occasion," said Jacynth, smiling.

" I myself was suffering from acute toothache, or who knows how the course of history might have been changed ? "

Very soon after this Jacynth left them on the plea that she knew they had much to say to each other.

" How's the bachelor establishment going ? " said Bernard cheerfully as the door shut.

" We miss your elevating influence, I assure you," Williams answered. " Montagu Robinson is, however, a more intelligent fellow than Simson's eulogy led me to expect. Our poor Ephraim is whole again. Simson continues to bully him and to fawn on me. We are not a romantic household. Romance should be kept to spice the routine of life. But you

remarked in the presence of your charming lady that you were blowed if you knew what I was here for—it led me to suppose that you knew why you were here—meaning in the world, I take it, not in this bijou residence. Was I right?"

"Fairly right."

"May I ask, then . . ."

Bernard interrupted him.

"Yes, I'll tell you, Cecilia; you won't understand, but it'll do me good."

"Sublime egoist."

"You'll mock. Oh, yes, you will. But this is it." The desire to wave his colours became to Bernard imperative. "I want to make joy credible. All misery and unhappiness come from selfishness; if people once knew that active unselfishness—that's to say, love—meant freedom, and freedom happiness! There's no one who can't be of use. If once people felt that they were wanted, that all kindness and gentleness and love is wanted, why, they'd find no time to be worrying about themselves. I

want to show people that it's no good sitting with folded hands wondering why such lovable creatures as themselves aren't loved. They must care for others; it's that that matters."

"You should distribute the Bible, my dear Bernard. It's been in circulation now some nineteen hundred and seven years, I believe. But what does that matter?"

"If the New Testament were read! But the words have been gilded and cheapened, and people turn away from the gilt and cheapness, not seeing that underneath lies world-truth. It's all mixed up with idiotic sects and squabbles, and a gospel of *don't do this* and *don't do that*, and it's so obscured by convention and habit and horribleness, that it's hardly possible to read a sentence without prejudice. All religion is one. All the little improvements in conditions and cleverness in material discoveries aren't real progress. Progress is only coming nearer to life which is from without—spiritual."

"If you were more original I should have

happier auguries as to your success as a novelist."

"Originality is merely putting new life into old truths."

"It's much easier to start a new truth—or was. But we are all becoming so sophisticated nowadays that perhaps a little wholesome bread and butter may be the right food, and the right food always pays."

"Pays! but you agree with me really, don't you?"

"I am afraid not. Your ideas sound prettily and will make a useful background for your novels. Men are moved solely by their pockets or by their—to put it delicately—their senses. That is life. The rest is not always humbug (though it is so usually), but dreamery. I personally do not care for dreams of any description. But it is getting late, and I will damp your ardour no longer."

"My ardour is Cecil-proof."

They rose and went downstairs. As Williams arranged his white scarf he said:

"I almost envy you your *Paradis artificiel*."



"Anyhow, my dear Cecilia," Bernard answered, "when all's said and done, it's so much better than your *Enfer artificiel*."

So they said good-night and parted.

II

BERNARD had not been at Woodlands in the summer before. He had spent one week-end there in the early spring, when the crocuses were beginning to display their valiant colours amongst the grass. He looked forward to his visit. Not only did he want to spend long summer days with Jacynth, to talk with Conrad and the Princess, but at Woodlands there was the special atmosphere of calm and of retreat from the world, which must have characterised a monastery in the Middle Ages. And he required retreat, though his life was joyous, for recollection; he required the stimulus of being with those people who had won gallantly through the long effort of life, and had gained the tranquillity which comes only, as it seemed to him, from the selflessness possible to age. For his work

and for himself—elements now wholly welded into one—he needed this, as he had been working hard.

What is it brings realisation—that which makes an idea outgrow the words which present it, which makes an incident more than the words in which it is described? It comes seldom—to many never. For too great a strain is put on a man's mind, when modern contrivances have enabled him to know every morning what has happened within the whole world's compass. Man's receptivity becomes choked. He reads with faint surprise of new guns which will fire from London to Paris, of airships, of murders, of burned cities, of huge schemes, and of huger frauds. No mind can realise the multitudinous impressions which continually touch it, and remain sane. Instinctively the mind shrinks from the conflict, and becomes uneasy, or, plunging into the thousand issues and excitements of the moment, forgets the eternal questions. But sometimes they are brought home to a man. Sometimes he sees distinctly what is essential and what is transitory.

Less perhaps than most people Bernard tried to put unpleasant thoughts away from him without facing them. But gradually for some time he had been conscious of an idea from which he instinctively shrank. It was too big, too simple. It spread over his mind's horizon and darkened the outlook like a black cloud. The idea was that without Jacynth none of the beauty of life would exist for him. Having begun to understand the meaning of life, he began to understand the meaning of death. He had met death; he had often thought about death distantly and sometimes mournfully. Death remained a remote fact. He had never realised the cessation of life. His friend had died abroad. That meant a longer interval between her letters, but little more. But now his love for Jacynth had quickened his consciousness, had shaken off the callousness, which, decked with the name of philosophy, passes often for a virtue. A slight occurrence was sufficient to startle this slowly gathering idea into intolerable liveliness.

The day after his arrival at Woodlands he was dressing for dinner, lazily watching the birds in the trees, and the lengthening shadows. He was in the small room with the raftered ceiling. The road passed in front of the window. The tall hedge, deep in young green, caught the glow of the evening sky. Everything was making ready for the peace of a summer night. The air seemed warm with happiness. A small boy, stumpy and red-cheeked, came in sight carrying a milk-can from the farm. Bernard saw with delight a kitten arching its back on his shoulder, and rubbing its round face against his red cheek. Just as they were in front of the window a large fox-terrier rushed up to the small boy, barking eagerly. The boy clutched at the kitten, but the kitten fell. The dog seized and shook it once. It lay stretched out in the road. The dog turned the body over with his nose, snuffing it surprised, then ran back to his master, a labourer. The labourer said to the small boy, who was crying, "'Tain't no use in crying, 'tis dead," and



picking up the kitten he pitched it over the hedge.

It happened in little less than a minute. The expanse of country seemed in the evening light to smile softly with a treacherous beauty before him. Was the beauty in league with that power which ranged through the world, that inexorable power before which he and all men were weak, defenceless as the dead kitten? And he stupidly happy, secure—when at any moment Jacynth might be stretched lifeless before him. He saw her lying crushed and bleeding in the road, her hair soiled with dust and blood, her body fit only to be burned or buried. Till that moment he had never loved her. He had taken joy with glib assurance, with a light heart, unheeding. His plan of expressing his easy, irreverent gladness was a meagre plan of repayment, a schoolboy's attempt to propitiate destiny.

There was a tap at his door.

"Come in," said Bernard.

And Jacynth entered like the spirit of love and freshness, Bernard thought, and was more

frightened. Her young sweetness must surely tempt the monster—Death.

"What is the matter, darling?" she asked.

He noticed the swift change of her face from joy to anxiety. He took her hand.

"I have seen something ghastly," he said. "I'll tell you to-night, may I?"

She stroked his forehead, answering softly:

"In my arms, dear."

In many little ways, that evening, imperceptible to all but Bernard, she showed him her love and concern. Conrad and the Princess appeared to him in a new light. Their courage and gentleness were thrown into strong relief by this shadow, which loomed behind them. They realised and understood. It was only he that was blind, long blind, and inexcusably. Many opportunities had been his. All he had missed till now. He had skimmed on the bright surface of things, taking much for granted, which should have won his admiration. He was an impostor. He was shallow. He used words without understanding their significance; he played

with ideas without feeling them. What was sincerity worth without some depth of comprehension? What was the value of imagination, unbased upon some of the elements of life? Nearly thirty years he had been living, and now for the first time he felt the meaning of death. His blindness seemed to him an unpardonable sin.

The matter was too near to him to speak of with any one but Jacynth. To her he must speak. With her he could be articulate. With her help he could perhaps find an answer to the questions which cried out within him. He never doubted that she understood. He knew now the reason of her deep gentleness.

"Come to me soon," she said in his ear at the end of the evening.

And he came soon.

For a long time he lay in her arms without moving and without speaking. He lay as a bruised child lies in his mother's arms. And she held him closely to her, to shield him with her body from every ill.

"Tell me," she said.

Her voice was low, so low as to be barely audible; but for all the softness lost nothing of its clear tone, like breath caught into sound.

Still he did not speak. The night was not dark. There was a rising moon, and all the stars were shining. In the mysterious light he saw the outline of her face and hair close by him. He felt the warmth of her body, and the sweetness of her breath touched his cheek. He could not think. Only somewhere lurked a power which might take her away from him, and he could not be without her, he could not be without her.

"There is death," he moaned.

Her hand caressed his forehead.

"Everywhere waiting . . . and without you emptiness . . . blackness . . . fear."

"And without you . . . for me?"

Her hand was stayed in his hair a moment, and her fingers moved gently on his head.

There were tears in his voice as he went on speaking:

"But I've no courage. I've never known.

Blind, blind, afraid to see reality. Now it overwhelms me, now it's forced on me. I saw something young, something full of happy life killed, killed quite suddenly, in the midst of all the beauty and joy of the evening. Then I knew . . . like a hand tearing at my heart . . . horrible, pitiless. And never to have realised—to have taken all this I've realised nothing, nothing. . . . Coward . . ."

She seemed to come more closely to him, to soothe him, to restore him, to strengthen him, as she said :

" Darling . . . darling . . . love shows."

The voice seemed to come as an answer to him, to be more than her voice, a phrase of the music of the spheres, which caressed his tortured spirit with a healing touch. Fear was leaving him.

In the realm of his mind there was a change. He had seen for a long time the universe shining with love's light. Then all his vision was suddenly distorted by the black shape of death. But now he slowly saw the darkness and the light at the same time, and the dark-

ness deepened the effect of the light. He was able to see another form—another power, the power of new life, of birth.

Idly he had hitherto thought of a child as something which needed too much attention, a responsibility, a hindrance, which he thanked knowledge could be avoided with more certainty than disease. He had not known what a child might mean, nor realised the wonder of birth. It had been connected in his mind too long with ignorance and the superstition that motherhood was a woman's sole function. He had regarded motherhood as the instinct of a woman fit for nothing else, just as some men were fit only to be breadwinners. The idea that the life of each generation should be consecrated to the next, in the limited sense that all should be sacrificed to children, was to him a detestable idea, a negation. But just as all sex problems and difficulties sank into insignificance before the realisation of love, so now all theories dwindled before the importance, the magnificence of this fact of birth. He had mentioned it to Jacynth as a

vague possibility, a danger almost, and remembered now her look of perplexity, her doubtful assent to what he said.

"We have, too, the power of new life," he whispered.

"You want . . . to give me a child ? "

"A thing for you only to decide. But new life . . . born of our love . . . think of it."

"Beautiful," she hesitated. "But, dear, wait . . . it would change our life."

"How ? "

"There's so much in life . . . for us . . . and we have our work."

"Everything that may mean joy may also mean sorrow . . . it depends a good deal how we face it, which it brings. Around all the big issues in life hangs uncertainty."

"Let's live together a year or two and realise better our love and ourselves, and then . . . when we are both more . . . more established. Dear, I don't distrust you or myself . . . and I'm not . . . not afraid, you know that. But that's how I feel. Do you understand ? "

"Yes, my darling, I do. It's for you, utterly

for you to decide, as far as any one may. Only seeing death and love more deeply, suddenly, made me breathless to embrace all life, not to shirk as I was shirking . . . unconsciously, perhaps."

He was silent; then he went on:

"It's a new joy I have never realised, you see."

"In some ways . . . the greatest . . . for me. . . . O, I love you."

"Isn't it queer there are people who think it wrong not to have as many children as chance sends?"

"Are there?"

"Yes. It's awful to think that there are children born who are not wanted—not wanted; and born simply from superstition and ignorance and lack of control. And the number of women who long for a child and never have the chance to have one—it's pathetic! Morality's a queer muddle of right and wrong. Little enough's known about the body, but what is known, elementary facts of sex, I'd have taught in every school. I

learnt how a baby was born from a gardener's boy, accidentally. And the hideous lies that circulate, which boys are frightened with!"

"I wonder why it all is."

"I don't know. It seems to come from an utter distrust of human nature. Things are changing, though. O, what you mean to me! To be able to talk about everything to you, in my arms, without shame. O, my darling, you can never know what you have done for me!"

They were silent. She took his hand, and kissing it, she went to sleep. He knew when sleep came upon her by the little twitches of her body. He loved her to be asleep in his arms. He raised himself gently, not to waken her. Leaning over her, he looked into her sleeping face, and touched her closed eyes and her forehead with his lips. In her sleep she moved a little nearer to him.

He could not sleep. He laid his head on the pillow so that his cheek felt the fragrance of her sweet regular breathing. Her confidence in him gave him strength and peace.

He could bear to think of death now, for her presence purified his soul of fear.

He saw that he was no longer on the edge of life, that at last he was in the full stream. Life for him no longer meant solely small personal worries; he was among the great issues. Love had brought him where Death and Birth moved. He saw himself infinitely little now and unimportant, and yet stronger than he had ever been, for the spirit of life supported him. His little personality had been opposed to this spirit and fretted by the opposition. Now he was one with all life. He had found the great happiness.

And what had he done to forward this end? He retraced the steps. It was as though from the very first, when he sought to avoid meeting Conrad, he had tried to thwart his own progress. It had quietly come almost without his recognition. Yet something in him had always desired this, had always striven after it. He had believed in the truth of his dreams.

And Jacynth? She lay sleeping by his side

like a child. She had a child's simplicity, a child's sincerity, a child's unquestioning faith. All the wisdom of the world could not go further than her quiet acceptance of the facts of life—her quiet understanding. She possessed that quality of which Christ spoke, when He said, "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." She had taken him into her kingdom.

The short summer night began to fade before the coming daylight. A bird twittered sleepily outside, feeling the approach of dawn. Bernard leaned over Jacynth, and kissed her lips gently. Her eyes unclosed, and her lips opened to his kiss. She put her warm arms sleepily round his neck, and drew him to her.

"Let's go out and see the dawn together," he said. "Shall we?"

"Yes," she answered, smiling.

"Wrap up well, you sleepy darling."

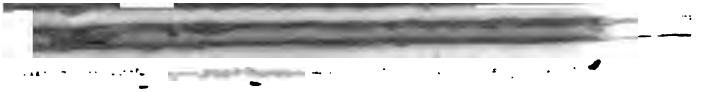
"I'm not sleepy."

They crept downstairs together, and carefully unbolted the front door. It was twilight, but the birds were beginning to sing. They took deep breaths of the fresh sweet air

standing in the porch. Jacynth smelled the roses, wet with dew, putting her face among their leaves—dewdrops shone upon her eyebrows.

Then they walked to the end of the garden, and together they welcomed the coming of a new day.

THE END



A BOY'S MARRIAGE

A Novel by

HUGH DE SÉLINCOURT

Crown 8vo. 6s. Second Edition.

PRESS OPINIONS

Daily Chronicle.—"Than Eva we do not remember ever to have come across a finer study of the Young Person as young wife. It is not cruelly done; on the contrary, it is done sympathetically, but with the kind of sympathy that sees all, and with the kind of art that presents with fidelity all it sees. . . . We must have another novel from Mr. de Sélincourt."

Tribune.—"This is a story to live in the memory, for it is so naturally told. The young man himself is fully studied and sympathetically described; even Eva, though not so well defined, is thoroughly human and girlish. They with their difficulties raise a real emotion of pity and sorrow in the mind of the reader, while he acquiesces in the unwritten moral that ignorance is not innocence."

Daily Telegraph.—"It is a very proper, legitimate, and highly interesting study of life, which French novelists have accustomed us to rather than English, who more often make incidents their chief object instead of temperament, which moulds the incidents. . . . It would, of course, have been quite possible to end the story differently, but it would have been spoilt in doing so, for the peculiar character of the boy would have been enfeebled. It is a worthily conceived and worthily executed story. All the characters are real."

Pall Mall Gazette.—"The heroine is a pretty little girl without very much depth of character, who embarks on love and marriage without realising the full meaning of either. The hero is a thoughtless, up-to-date young fellow, who has been rather overspoiled at home, and is rather easily emotioned. His father and mother are a charming couple. As the story goes along, the author's descriptions recall Maupassant's stories."

Athenæum.—"The best points in Mr. de Sélincourt's novel are his delicacy of treatment and sense of character. He has the makings of a fine novelist."

Daily Mail.—"The Teruel family are very well rendered, and Mr. Teruel, senior, is extremely lifelike. In fact, we get the feeling that we are moving among real people in a real world, and are somewhat annoyed that we cannot shake Beverley and show him his stupidity. . . . The book is in its essentials sound, and shows very promising gifts. It has the breath of life, and we have read it with great interest."

Bystander.—"The issue of this story—I believe the author's first novel—is that of a young man marrying 'for love,' but discovering that his wife bears towards him what one may call an emotional antipathy which ultimately repulses him, finally bringing about his defection from her, and his subsequent demoralisation through association with a woman of 'another sphere.' The story is charmingly written, and well characterised, and altogether readable."

Mercure de France.—"Tout le début est excellent, le récit est plein d'intérêt. Les personnages principaux et secondaires sont fort bien campés; le décor dans lequel ils se meuvent est très agréable et piquant dans sa simplicité; l'ensemble est bien construit, bien agencé très convaincant."

THE STRONGEST PLUME

A Novel by

HUGH DE SÉLINCOURT

Crown 8vo. 6s. Second Edition.

PRESS OPINIONS

Revue de deux Mondes.—"Et comment, enfin, pourrais-je terminer cette rapide revue du roman anglais d'aujourd'hui sans mentionner le vif plaisir que m'ont causé des études psychologiques à la fois élégantes et solides, comme *La plus forte Plume* de M. Hugh de Sélincourt."

Morning Post.—"While it deals with a problem almost as unconventional and as difficult to handle as the problem of 'A Boy's Marriage,' it brings to it so much more skill in the handling of character, and so much clearer a sense of proportion, that we do not feel for a moment, as we were perhaps unjust in feeling in the earlier book, that the problem is treated for the sake of effect. . . . Mr. de Sélincourt has moved so far between his first and second novels that we shall look for his third with considerable interest."

Daily Mail.—"As long as Mr. de Sélincourt draws his characters as clearly and writes his thoughts as well as he has in this book, we need have no quarrel with him, for he is undoubtedly a novelist who takes himself seriously, and means to give us the best he can, which, so far, has been very good."

Daily Telegraph.—"The first page of this book promises us that we are in for a good thing, and the first page is a witness of truth. Mr. Hugh de Sélincourt is possessed of a pretty pen, and he has a real desire to study men and women, their motives and their moods. His first novel, 'A Boy's Marriage,' is still fresh in our minds, and his second is perhaps even better. He has a fine future before him, for he has the qualifications necessary for writing novels worth writing, and he has by no means got to the top of his ladder."

Literary World.—"This is a very fine novel. As a study of temperament it is a most careful and artistic piece of work, while its literary form reaches a high standard. . . . Mr. de Sélincourt is an accomplished story-teller, and his style is graceful and pleasant. He seems to have carved out a department in fiction for himself, a department that has been called somewhere 'reticent realism' not inaptly."

Daily News.—"The recent novels that are worth taking into account might almost be divided into two classes. Those that are, in the cant phrase, wholesome, and those which primarily aim at giving a rude shock to the conventional notions of respectability. The besetting sin of the former class is a tendency towards dull sentimentalism, of the latter the worse dulness of decadence and impropriety. Mr. de Sélincourt is among the revolutionists, and it is to his credit that he has altogether avoided the defect of which we write. He deals with a problem quite worthy of serious consideration, frankly but restrainedly."

Academy.—"'The Strongest Plume' is an uncomfortable story for the conventionally-minded. It deals a deadly blow to the ordinary accepted notions of the 'respectable.' In 'A Boy's Marriage' Mr. de Sélincourt gave an extraordinary psychological study of a youth of fine temper. Now he gives us a parallel story, in which he traces the emotions and sensations of a high-spirited girl."

Weekly Sun.—"Mr. de Sélincourt lifts the curtain and shows us the Bayswater home of a simple, worthy lady, Miss Miriam Apsley, decorated with a lace cap and the habit of religion; methodical in both and in all else besides; early Victorian and totally charming, until one contemplates the need to share her home. Such a need has fallen on Joan de Guise, her niece, and it appears that this house of rules and religion can offer little to a young girl suffering from a mother's neglect and sore with 'the memory of past folly.'"

THE WORKS OF
ANATOLE FRANCE

IN ENGLISH. Edited by FREDERIC CHAPMAN.

Demy 8vo. (9 × 5¾ inches). Six Shillings.

**** *It has long been a reproach to England that only one volume by Anatole France has been adequately rendered into English; yet outside this country he shares the distinction with Tolstoi of being the greatest and most daring student of humanity now living. Mr. John Lane has pleasure in announcing his English translations of M. France's works, which will be under the general editorship of Mr. Frederic Chapman. The format of the volumes leaves little to be desired. They will be printed from Caslon type upon a paper light of weight but strong in texture, with a cover design in crimson and gold, a gilt top, end papers from designs by Aubrey Beardsley, and initials by Henry Ospovat. In short, these are volumes for the bibliophile as well as the lover of fiction, and form perhaps the cheapest library edition of copyright novels ever published, for the price is only that of an ordinary novel. The translation of these books has been entrusted to such competent French scholars as Mr. Alfred Allinson, Hon. Maurice Baring, Mr. Frederic Chapman, Mr. Robert B. Douglas, Mr. A. W. Evans, Mrs. Farley, Lafcadio Hearn, Mrs. John Lane, Mrs. Newmarch, Mr. C. E. Roche, Miss Winifred Stephens, and Miss M. P. Willcocks.*

JOAN OF ARC. A Translation by WINIFRED STEPHENS. Two Volumes.

THE RED LILY. Translated by WINIFRED STEPHENS.

MOTHER OF PEARL. Translated by THE EDITOR.

THE CRIME OF SYLVESTRE BONNARD. Translated by LAFCADIO HEARN.

THE GARDEN OF EPICURUS. Translated by ALFRED ALLINSON.

THE WELL OF ST. CLARE. A Translation by ALFRED ALLINSON.

THE OPINIONS OF JEROME COIGNARD. A Translation by the HONBLE. MAURICE BARING.

JOCASTA AND THE FAMISHED CAT. A Translation by Mrs. FARLEY.

BALTHASAR. A Translation by Mrs. JOHN LANE.

THE ASPIRATIONS OF JEAN SERVIEN. A Translation by THE EDITOR.

MY FRIEND'S BOOK. A Translation by THE EDITOR.

THE ELM TREE ON THE MALL. A Translation by M. P. WILLCOCKS.

THE WICKER-WORK WOMAN. A Translation by M. P. WILLCOCKS.

NEW SIX-SHILLING NOVELS

A MAN OF GENIUS: A Novel. By M. P. WILLCOCKS, Author of "The Wingless Victory." With 10 Illustrations by WINIFRED STORY.

**** *Miss Willcocks' success with "The Wingless Victory" has been notable, the more so when it is remembered that it was only her second book. Her new story deals with Devonshire, where she is so much at home in describing the beauties of her native county.*

THE BISHOP'S SCAPEGOAT: A Novel. By T. B. CLEGG, Author of "The Love Child," and "The Wilderness."

**** *The Bishop of Capricornia, when a vicar, for one moment forgot his cloth in remembering his manhood. The far-reaching results of this lapse form the subject of Mr. Clegg's new novel. Eventually the Bishop discovers the suffering which ensued from his crime and the punishment which Providence has meted out to him.*

THE GREEN MAN: A Romance.

**** *The Green Man is a wandering minstrel who, with a masked pianist, attracts a great deal of attention during a summer season in the Isle of Wight. The Duchess of Hampshire and Lady Hawke are sure that the Green Man is the centre of a mystery. He is! The author tells his story with great charm and introduces his reader to many alluring characters who come and go through this sunny romance.*

A MISTAKEN MARRIAGE: A Novel. By F. E. MILLS YOUNG.

**** *Laid amid the scene of the Transvaal and the Veldt is the tragedy of a young English girl married to a blackguard of the mines. Her gradual awakening to knowledge of her husband's character and her final emancipation by a better man are narrated with a fine sense of romance and local colour.*

THE LOST CABIN MINE. By FREDERIC NIVEN.

**** *Mr. Niven has woven a romance that carries on the tradition of Defoe and Stevenson. The story is one of those that are read by all, young and old; and (unless we are greatly mistaken) it will take its place among the open-air romances of our language.*

NEW SIX-SHILLING NOVELS

SOMEONE PAYS. By NOEL BARWELL.

*** *A novel, written (like Evelina) in the form of letters. A pretty romance is woven round the contents of the daily post-bag, first at a country vicarage and later at a Cambridge college.*

A POOR MAN'S HOUSE. By STEPHEN REYNOLDS.

*** *This is a record of the author's experiences as an inmate of the household of a Devon fisherman, not merely a lodger, but a participant in the daily life and even the toil of the family. The writer betrays a keen sense of the sea and a real love for sea life.*

A PRINCESS OF HACKNEY: A Romance. By G. C. COMPTON.

*** *"Romance brought up the 9.15!" said a poet. In Mr. Compton's book Romance brings up many things, princesses of Hackney among other. The story is one of modern life and there is a throne at stake; intrigue, vengeance, conspiracy, love, daring and devotion war and clash in familiar London streets. The book is in many ways remarkable and has the virtue of being in every way original.*

OUR DAILY BREAD: A Novel. By CLARA VIEBIG, Author of "Absolution." A Translation by MARGARET CLARK.

*** *In this powerful novel, "the 'Esther Waters' of Germany" as it has been called, Clara Viebig gives us a vivid picture of social conditions among the lower classes in Berlin. She takes us everywhere: into fifth-floor dwellings, into the "cellar"-shop—where servants come to buy and to gossip—to the Salvation Army, into the Friedrich Strasse. Everywhere we meet countrified, honest, awkward Mina, and it is her fate that rivets our attention and haunts our memory. Betrayed and deserted, she struggles desperately to support herself and her child. The story is one of grim fascination and grips the imagination as did "Absolution."*

NEW SIX-SHILLING NOVELS

THE CHICHESTER INTRIGUE: A Novel. By THOMAS COBB, Author of "Mrs. Erricker's Reputation," "The Dissemblers," etc.

THE CHILD OF CHANCE. By MAXIME FORMONT.

ASHES: A Novel. Translated from the Italian of Grazia Deledda. By HELEN HESTER COLVILL.

**** This is a story of Sardinia by Grazia Deledda, the well-known and popular Sardinian authoress. It is a picture of simple country life, set in a poetic though sombre background. Anania is a love child, deserted by his mother Ali for his good. He is brought up by his father in comfortable circumstances; but always haunted by the thought of his lost mother, whom he seeks even in Rome. At last he finds her in the mountain village of his birth. She is in the last stage of degradation and misery; but Anania leaves all, even his sweetheart, that he may take charge of and rescue her. All the energy of poor Ali's nature, once bright and beautiful, has gone into the task of benefiting her son; and now, unable to escape from him, she kills herself lest she should ruin his life. Though sad, the story ends on a note of hope, for Anania's character is purified and strengthened by his long experience of grief and self-abnegation, his mother's no less than his own.*

ABSOLUTION: A Novel. By CLARA VIEBIG.

**** On the publication of this remarkable book in Germany last autumn, a lengthy review appeared in the "Westminster Gazette," from which the following passages are selected:—"In Germany this book of the sombre purple cover and the design of a halo surrounding the strange title is everywhere. It is on train and steamer, in little odd bookshops of sleepy country towns, and (often in strange company) among the best-displayed wares in the shop-windows of the main streets of great cities. 'It is a terrible book,' people say as they sit poring over its pages, but we doubt whether anyone, having taken it up, lays it aside as too 'terrible' before he has reached the abrupt, dramatic end. . . . The face of a woman, young and proud, and very beautiful, haunts the pages of the new novel by the most powerful of the women writers of Germany."*

THE DOOR OF DARKNESS. By MAUDE ANNESLEY.

THE WINE OF LIFE. By MAUDE ANNESLEY.

"A powerful novel . . . originality of treatment . . . really close study of human nature . . . a live woman drawn for us so carefully, whose emotions seem as real as her actions are natural."
Evening Standard.

NEW SIX-SHILLING NOVELS

ARTHUR'S. By A. NEIL LYONS. Crown 8vo.

**** *Arthur is the proprietor of a coffee-stall, the centre of a nightly foregathering of shady personalities, who meet "to unchain their intellects and get to the bottom of things." Mr. Neil Lyons has by one reviewer been called "Phil May in Literature." He is thoroughly at home in the midst of the curb-stone society whose human tendencies and capacity for romance and intrigue he so deftly portrays: be it cabmen, drunken sailor, pickpocket, or destitute wretch, he draws all with the unerring instinct of an artist and brother.*

LADY JULIA'S EMERALD: A Novel. By HELEN HESTER COLVILL. Crown 8vo. 6s.

**** *Lesley was the daughter of a woman of genius, and she hoped she had genius herself. She set out to follow her star; but she made great mistakes, and was doubted and misunderstood even by those who loved her best. For a time she was the fashion; then came a sudden downfall, which her enemies called the Exposure of an Adventuress. She never succeeded in the high tasks she had set herself; but she brought back Victor Penruddocke to his lost faith in womanhood, and she learned herself that even for a child of genius Love is the surest guide into the higher life.*

THE FINANCES OF SIR JOHN KYNNERSLEY. By A. C. FOX-DAVIES, Author of "The Dangerville Inheritance," "The Mauleverer Murders," etc.

PAINTED SHADOWS. By RICHARD LE GALLIENNE.

"Delicate and delightful . . . exquisitely airy . . . M. Le Gallienne writes prose like a poet."

Mr. JAMES DOUGLAS in *Star*.

THE SON OF THE BONDWOMAN. Translated from the Spanish of EMILIA PARDO BAZAN by ETHEL H. HEARN.

"Beautiful in its fresh force of feeling . . . Firmly handled and well balanced . . . the finest feminine insight shown."—*Nation*.

THE MALICE OF THE STARS. By E. W. DE GUÉRIN.

". . . A plot of cunning structure . . . told with much delightful humour."—*Athenæum*.

youth passes and desires become less stro

THE ISLE OF MAIDS: A
HAINSSELIN. Crown 8vo. 6s.

*** A story dealing with the adventu*
from Oxford, who decide, by way of a
habited island and live for a time awa
select one of the Ægean group in the M
adventures and stirring scenes follo
making. The treatment is uncommon, a
belonging to the usual hackneyed cate
handling of grotesque situations brought
of the hero is humorous and entertainin
painted with an imaginative brush on a
the artist brings into play the romance
portrays in the foreground these two
surrounded with strange scenes and uns.

LOVE AND THE IRONMO
By F. J. RANDALL. Crown 8vo.

"Since . . . 'Vice Versa' (F. Anstey
purely farcical imagination so full of e
a most felicitous debut, and we gladly
hearty welcome and the sincerest cong
the Ironmonger' is certain to be a succes
the gaiety of the nation. If the author c
spirits be will soon be amongst the most
of contemporary humorists."—*Daily Tel*

OPEN HATCHWAYS. By



Stanford University Libraries
3 6105 022 363 738

STANFORD UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
CECIL H. GREEN LIBRARY
STANFORD, CALIFORNIA 94305-6004
(415) 723-1493

All books may be recalled after 7 days

DATE DUE